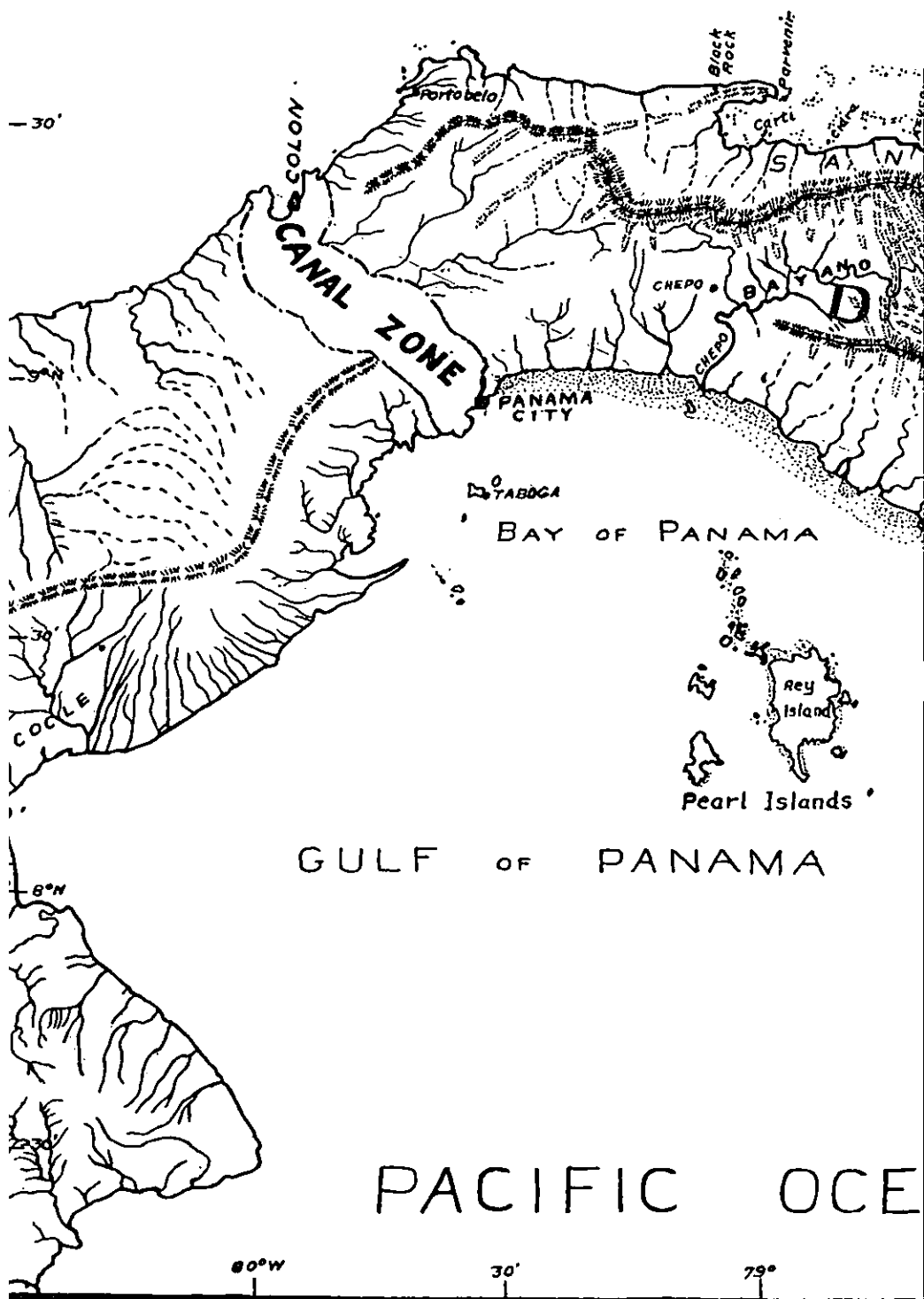


*WHITE INDIANS
OF DARIEN*

80°W

30'

79°



30'

78°

30'

77°W

17⁵

CA-

CARIBBEAN SEA

30"



70'

78°

30'

77°W

R.O.M.



*"Mimi," White Indian Girl from San Blas
Brought to the U. S. A.*

WHITE INDIANS OF DARIEN

Benton B. Sharp

WHITE INDIANS OF DARIEN

by Richard Oglesby Marsh



G·P·PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK

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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
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THIS BOOK
IS DEDICATED TO
PROFESSOR JOHN L. BAER
ANTHROPOLOGIST AND ETHNOLOGIST OF THE SMITHSONIAN
INSTITUTION OF WASHINGTON, D. C.

who

accompanied us on our scientific expedition through Darien, who was taken sick in the unknown interior valley of Darien, who was transported by us in a dug-out canoe hauled up the turbulent headwaters of the Chucunaque River to the southern foothills of the San Blas Mountain Range, who was then carried across the San Blas Mountain Range in a hammock slung from a pole supported on the shoulders of eight "wild" Tule Indians, who died on the Caribbean shore at the San Blas Indian village of Acla, and who was buried wrapped in an army blanket in a grave dug with our tin eating plates by Charles Charlton, Major Harry Johnson and myself, last remaining survivors of the fourteen scientists and army men who started on our exploration expedition.

He probably now knows those hidden secrets of interior Darien to discover which he lost his life.

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WHITE INDIANS
OF DARIEN



CHAPTER I

THE UNKNOWN VALLEY

*

THIS story properly begins with a sextant "shot" of Mt. Porras on the Pacific coast of Darien. If I had not taken that "shot" I would probably have made a superficial survey of the region, reported to my employers, Henry Ford and Harvey Firestone, that there was no suitable rubber land in Panama, and passed on to Liberia or the Philippines. As it was, my last sight of Panama was from the after deck of an American cruiser leaving Colon: President Chiari had proclaimed me an outlaw for "inciting to rebellion, murder and arson," and the Panamanian police had instructions to shoot me on sight if I ever set foot in the territory of the Republic again.

You will find "Mt. Porras" on very few maps. Most of them show only a single range of mountains in Darien—the San Blas Range on the Caribbean side. Some more recent ones show two ranges, but most of them give a different name to the highest peak on the Pacific side of the Isthmus. Belisario Porras is no longer President of Panama. To any one familiar with Panamanian politics this simple fact is sufficient explanation for the change of name.

At any rate a single tall mountain dominates the long range leading down the Pacific coast of Darien southeast from the Canal Zone. It stands up suddenly after the manner of South American mountains above a low, swampy shore line.

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As my little Diesel coaster poked along toward San Miguel Bay, I amused myself by triangulating upon this peak and plotting my shots on a Military Intelligence map.

This map looked pretty good, nicely decorated with an accurate coast line and accurate-looking mountains and rivers in the interior. I knew, of course, that the details were largely supposition. No one on record had been five miles back from much of that coast since the Mayas. But I had no idea the whole thing could be wrong from start to finish. After all Mt. Porras was only a hundred miles or so from the Canal Zone.

But as soon as I got out the map and compared the mountains upon it with the mountains I could see with my own eyes, I realized that the accuracy ended not far from high-water mark. The peaks were spaced differently, and there were gaps where no gaps should be. So I determined my position accurately in relation to the coastline and took a shot at Mt. Porras, standing up sharp and clear on the northern horizon.

Then I sat down, killed time until the boat had covered enough distance to give a good base-line, and repeated the performance. I made three shots in all, to give an accurate check, and was just beginning to work out my figures when the boat rounded San Lorenzo Point into San Miguel Bay. Ordinarily I should have been in the pilot house watching the change of course. But my figures were more interesting. Quickly I checked them over, hardly able to believe what they showed.

There was no doubting the extraordinary conclusion. The whole mountain chain was thirty miles out of place! In fact it was a totally different chain, paralleling the one marked on the map. For four hundred years navigators had sailed down this coast. The "great powers" of the world had squabbled over the Isthmus of Panama. The Canal was the greatest engineering achievement of history. But no one had taken the trouble to find out if the mountains seen from the Pacific were

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the same as those so carefully charted from naval vessels on the Caribbean side.

So absorbed was I with this discovery—an unmarked mountain range and probably a wide unknown valley a hundred miles from the Canal—that I was paying no attention to events nearer at hand. The boat had turned up into San Miguel Bay, and I came back to earth when a shout of angry protest arose from the seven Panamanian negroes of the crew. They had been recruited on the waterfront for a cruise along the coast. Only the mulatto captain knew our real destination, and he had been instructed to keep it secret as long as possible. Now he could do so no longer. He announced that we were bound for the Chucunaque River. The uproar from the negroes proved it was a good thing we hadn't broken the news to them sooner.

According to the negroes, the Chucunaque was about the worst place on God's earth. The people of Yavisa were "bush niggers"—descendants of run-away slaves and other outlaws. They had kept up their traditions meticulously and were still a very efficient gang of cut-throats and robbers. And behind them, further up the Chucunaque lived savage Indians perpetually on the warpath, to say nothing of a fine assortment of diseases, wild beasts, crocodiles, poisonous snakes, insects and other tropical details. In fact, the crew was loudly unanimous for going home.

It wasn't quite a mutiny. There were three and a half whites on board, counting the Captain. That's plenty to overawe seven negroes. But it looked like one for a while. The Captain had to argue, threaten, bully, and reassure. Finally all was quiet again, and I returned to my calculations.

But not for long. Besides the seven negroes, there was one Indian in the crew, with straight features and long hair which identified him as a mountain type seldom seen on the coast.

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He had not joined the negroes in their noisy protest, merely stood silently scowling. Indians in general are not talkative. They prefer to act first and talk afterwards if they are still able to.

I looked up from my map-table when I heard a loud cry, almost the cry of a wild beast. Running toward me from the forward deck, his face twisted with rage, was the Indian, a long machete held above his head. I let out a yell, got my American companions behind me, pushed the map-table between us and the Indian, and prepared to meet his attack with a deck-chair. Our fire-arms were all below.

But I didn't have to use that deck-chair. The negro engineer raised his head from the engine-room hatch and sized up the situation in a flash. Quick as a cat he leaped up the companionway and tackled the Indian foot-ball fashion, bringing him down on the deck. The Captain pounced on him and soon had him trussed up from head to foot with ropes. Then at the Captain's orders he was tied to a stanchion and lashed with a leather whip until the poor devil was terribly scarred and nearly dead. He was then carried to the cargo hatch and thrown down flat on his back on the bottom.

The Captain came back from his task smiling with satisfaction. I asked what had provoked the attack. He shrugged his shoulders. The Indian, he said, came from the upper Chucunaque himself and was patriotic after a fashion. It was forbidden for outsiders to enter that territory. He had hoped to lead a mutiny and head us off. He might have succeeded too except for the presence of mind of the black engineer. If he'd cut off my head with that machete, the crew would probably have hopped on the band-wagon and looted the boat. Such things actually happen in Darien.

After the boat had quieted down, I leaned back in my

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chair and took stock. This expedition was beginning to look good. All the way down the coast I'd been remembering weird tales about the mysterious land we were headed for. And now we had a mutinous crew, hostile tribes, an unknown valley to explore. At this point I'm afraid I rather forgot that Detroit and Akron were worried about their rubber supply. There might be much more interesting things than rubber-land in Darien.

I suppose I had better go back to the beginning and tell what brought me to the accessible but little frequented coast of Darien. It's a commercial story, but much more interesting than most. In summary it is this: that the United States which used eighty per cent of the world's production of rubber was getting worried about England, which at that time controlled almost the whole supply.

The history of rubber is a splendid example of English foresight and diplomatic-commercial adroitness. When rubber first became an article of commerce, it was produced almost entirely from the wild *Hevea Braziliensis* trees of the Amazon valley. After the invention of the automobile, the Amazon had a tremendous boom. Brazil realized that she possessed a monopoly and profited from it to the full.

Quite naturally, as soon as the Brazilians knew what a gold mine they had under their control, they passed drastic laws to prevent the seeds of the *Hevea Braziliensis* from finding their way to other countries. But here entered the wily British. Long before the automobile created a large market for rubber, the British government with characteristic foresight had sent a representative to Brazil to smuggle a few of the precious seeds back to England. Some of them were cultivated and studied under glass at Kew Gardens in London. Others were sent to the East. From these were propagated large scale

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plantations in Ceylon and British Malaya and later with British capital in the Dutch East Indies.

When these plantations were set out, there was comparatively little demand for rubber. But about the time the first of them came into bearing, the automobile arrived on the scene, and the two industries grew up together. So much we owe to British foresight. Without it we should have had to wait many years for our cheap cars.

The war boomed the rubber business further. The plantations were expanded fantastically, often wastefully. But after the treaty of Versailles the demand kept up, even grew. The prevailing price was about twenty cents a pound, which allowed the neat profit of one hundred per cent.

At this point a new factor entered the game. The war left the British Empire in debt to the United States to the tune of billions of dollars. When the United States refused to cancel the debt, the British agreed to pay six billions over a period of sixty-two years.

How were they going to do it? Economists shook their heads and said it couldn't be done. The British Empire had no such favorable trade balance, and it did not intend to ship us the major part of its gold production. But Stanley Baldwin and Montague Norman of the Bank of England returned to London not at all worried. They had a plan to make the Americans themselves pay the debt.

This plan was the soul of simplicity. The Stephenson Rubber Restriction Act of 1922 organized the British plantations of the Far East under government control and limited strictly the amount they could export. Its announced purpose was to "stabilize the price of crude rubber at thirty cents," a modest profit of two hundred per cent. But it didn't stop there. Almost at once the price shot up to \$1.21. No wonder the British government was not alarmed about how to pay its

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debt. The United States then consumed upwards of 600,000,000 pounds a year. The excess profit on rubber would pay off the whole six billion dollars in ten years.

Of course, as soon as the beauties of this maneuver were clear to the American automobile and tire manufacturers, tremendous pressure was brought to bear on Washington to do something about it. In 1923 Senator McCormick secured passage of a bill appropriating \$500,000 to devise means of breaking the monopoly. The War Department became interested because of the military angle. The Department of Commerce under Secretary Hoover started a campaign to tell the American public why the price of their tires had jumped so tremendously.

This was where I came in. I had been interested in rubber for many years, had visited the plantations in Ceylon and Malaya, had "run" wild rubber trails at the headwaters of the Amazon. From the first it had seemed to me that eastern Panama was the logical place for American rubber developments. I could see no practicality then, and can see none now, for American plantations anywhere except in the Caribbean region. The Far East, because of cheap labor, can produce at the lowest price all the rubber the world needs. The only justification for American plantations is to prevent monopolistic price fixing and to secure a supply in war-time.

Rubber is a vital commodity in time of war, as Germany learned to her sorrow. The only war the United States need fear is from a combination of Europe on one side and Japan on the other. With such an alliance against us we would only fool ourselves in thinking that we could maintain open communications with either the Philippines, Liberia, or the Amazon.

So our problem was to produce rubber as near home as possible. Natural conditions demand that the plantations be

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within ten degrees of the equator. The soil must be rich, deep, and well-drained. The rain-fall must be at least one hundred inches and must be well distributed over the year. These conditions limit the available rubber areas to the Caribbean countries from Venezuela to Nicaragua. Of all of these I was convinced that eastern Panama, or Darien, was the most suitable.

I had converted my senior partner, General G. W. Goethals of Panama Canal fame, to this belief. Goethals had sent me to Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce. Hoover sent me to Harvey Firestone and Henry Ford. And the upshot of the matter was that in 1923 I arrived in Panama with a small expedition to look for suitable rubber lands. I had two American companions, a rubber buyer recently returned from Singapore and a lawyer whose job was to pass on the titles, if any, to the lands we might locate. We combed the better known parts of Panama without result. The region between the Canal and Costa Rica was too irregular for large-scale rubber growing. The only other chance was Darien, the almost unexplored section toward the Colombian border.

CHAPTER II

THE DEFENSES OF DARIEN

*

TO the English speaking public Darien has just one connotation—"stout Cortez," who we all know never went near the place. So we change "Cortez" to "Balboa" and close the discussion. There is little more accurate information forthcoming. Darien is a disembodied name to the outside world. It is identified with no products, people, popular history or anything else.

And the curious thing about it is that the nearer you get to Darien the deeper the mystery becomes. The Americans in the Canal Zone know almost nothing about the place. The Panamanians know only parts of the coast line and a set of weird and terrifying yarns. The area contains no officials, no government. The ships of the world pass only fifty miles away, but none of them ever stops.

It seems rather incredible that such a large unknown region should exist within a hundred to two hundred miles of the Canal Zone—probably one of the half dozen best-known places in the world. But Darien in that respect is rather like the squalid slums under the Brooklyn Bridge, which are entirely mysterious to the strap-hangers who pass above their roofs. It is one of the numerous "blind spots" of Latin America, although every one passing through the Canal has seen its blue mountains from the sea.

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This condition is due to no mere accident or oversight. Darien is protected from all except the most determined explorers by an extraordinary combination of circumstances. To judge from the map, you'd think it possible to walk right across the isthmus. The maximum width is little more than a hundred miles. But a majority of those who have tried this jaunt are no longer with us.

Travel in Darien has numerous difficulties, some of them common to all Tropical America, some of them peculiar to itself. First of all comes the jungle, which has to be seen to be appreciated. There are jungles and jungles. Some of them are very pleasant when a trail is already there. But when there is no trail, they are apt to be unadulterated hell.

The jungle of Darien is about the worst on the list. Even the Indians seldom try to force their way through it. They use the rivers wherever possible, for the swiftest, shallowest mountain brook is preferable to the tangle of vines on land. With an efficient gang of machete-wielders a white man can cover only a mile or two a day if all goes well. After a fortnight the jungle mats together again as tightly as ever. There are insects and disease to consider. You can't hope to live off the country. There are numerous watercourses and bottomless swamps. There are jagged mountains veiled in a thick felt of wire-like vines and razor-sharp grass. All in all, the land route to Darien is rightly considered impossible. Perhaps the Maya civilization or one of its forerunners extended into the region. But since that time it is safe to say that no one has traversed much of the interior by land.

In general the rivers are the only highways of such tropical regions, and when they fail, a blind spot remains long after adjacent areas have been penetrated. These blind spots rarely appear on the maps. Almost all of South America has a rather "explored" look to judge from the maps, which are

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uniformly covered with a network of elegant rivers, meticulously marked in all their meanderings. Do not be deceived. The Latin American governments hate to admit that they are not familiar with their own countries, so their cartographers fill in the blanks with rivers—usually the only details shown. Often these pass gayly through mountain ranges without a quiver. Many of them flow into the wrong ocean or at right angles to their real courses.

Even where the rivers have really been followed to their sources, the country back from the banks may remain almost wholly unknown. A jungle river is only a narrow strip of water between two vertical green walls. The smaller rivers are green tunnels. The explorer learns nothing about what lies ten paces behind the banks. He may pass within a stone's throw of a ruined stone city. He may fail to observe a whole mountain range. There may be open grass lands a few rods back from the swampy banks—or lakes—or cultivated fields. Much of South America has been explored in this way, which leaves it practically as unknown as ever.

But in the case of Darien, not even the rivers have been followed to their sources. There are two reasons for this—the peculiar geography of the region and the equally peculiar Indians. We'll take up only the geography now. We'll have plenty to say about the Indians later.

Take a look at the map. Start at the Pacific entrance of the Canal and follow the coast-line toward the southeast. After you pass the mouth of the Chepo River, you are looking at unknown country. The numerous ships bound for Peru or Chile pass outside the Pearl Islands, leaving the inner channel to rare coastal boats. Beyond the Rio Chepo the coast is wholly uninhabited except perhaps for a few renegade negroes. No one attempts to land on it, for the shore is bordered by broad strips of swamp and liquid mud. The rivers running down

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from the Porras mountains are too small for any kind of navigation. Some cartographers decorate this coast with the names of towns, but in doing so they are either using their imaginations or erecting monuments to Spanish settlements long since abandoned.

The first point of interest on this unapproachable coast is San Miguel Bay, which opens through a tortuous channel into Darien Harbor, a magnificent landlocked basin of deep water surrounded by highlands. Into it flow two large rivers—the Savanna from the north and the Tuyra from the south. The Tuyra is fairly well-known—for these regions—because a gold mine at Cana on its upper waters was worked in ancient as well as recent times. But it was not thought to lead to the interior behind Darien Harbor, only southward toward Colombia.

To judge from all previous maps the Savanna was the logical entry into the interior, and the most casual glance at this river shows why it is not a feasible route. It is not, in fact, a river at all. From the gap between the Porras mountains and the "Marsh Range" (named after me by President Porras and now called something else) the Savanna is nothing but a wide "glacier" of bottomless liquid mud flanked by brackish swamps. At the time of the full moon the twenty-three feet maximum tide of the Pacific brings a roaring flood of water up over the "glacier." Only for an hour or two is it deep enough to float a canoe, and it runs in a new channel every month.

Even a highly skilled Indian couldn't make the whole passage on a single tide. He would have to wait, stuck in the slimy ooze, until the water came back. He would have to carry food and water. He would run the risk of getting into a false channel and being marooned for a solid month until the next spring tide. No human could walk or swim in that mud. If

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he did manage to reach the swampy shore, he would be little better off. He would have plenty of crocodiles as playmates, but his chances of getting out alive would be very small. So the Savanna River route, which looks so good on the map, is a delusion.

The only possibility left is the Tuyra, and here we will discover the real reason why interior Darien had never been explored. According to all the maps published before I made my "shots" on Mt. Porras, the interior contained a single mountain range, nearer the Atlantic than the Pacific. If such were the case, there was no reason to think that the Savanna did not drain the logical area behind what appeared to be its own headwaters. The Savanna was effectively blocked by the mud. The Tuyra was thought to lead far to the southeast. No one suspected that the interior contained a wide level valley which could be entered by the Chucunaque, one of the many branches of the Tuyra.

Now to describe briefly the people of Darien—or rather the people of the coasts, for I was the first to learn anything much about the tribes of the interior and what I found will appear in later chapters. The northern, or Caribbean, coast is peopled by an extraordinary nation of Indians who call themselves "Tule" but are more generally known as the San Blas Indians. The Spaniards appeared early on the San Blas Coast, looking for gold as usual. But they found little, and presently the Indians got together and drove them out with great slaughter. From that day to this the "Tule people" have maintained their independence except for sporadic recent encroachments, of which more anon.

When the Tules finally got rid of the Spaniards, they set about taking steps which would preserve them in the future. Very wisely they did not refuse to trade with their late enemies, but they would never allow a trader to spend the night

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in their territory or go back into the interior. This law has been enforced rigidly upon every one with the exception of myself, and my dealings with the San Blas Indians were wholly unusual. As a result no one explores interior Darien from the Caribbean. It just isn't done.

On the Pacific side, along the shores of Darien Harbor and on the Tuyra River, you will see on the map the names of a number of villages. The inhabitants are "bush niggers"—in general as primitive as their ancestors in Africa and much more primitive than the Tule Indians. I shall call them negroes from now on. They have practically no Indian blood, a few traces of Spanish, but to all intents and purposes they are negroes.

Usually these negroes speak a debased dialect of Spanish, wear the rags of civilized clothes, and otherwise consider themselves outposts of civilization. But they have practically no contact with the outside world, and their filth, laziness, and cowardice make them very little help to an explorer.

The rest of the Pacific slope is inhabited by rather peaceful and harmless Indians known as Cholas or Chocos, very different both physically and culturally from the Tules on the other side of the Isthmus. They are generally not considered dangerous, certainly not those on the waterfronts, although a number of travelers who have ventured into the interior of their territory, among a kindred people calling themselves Chocoi, have not returned.

The only town on the Chucunaque, chief branch of the Tuyra, is Yavisa, a negro settlement of a few score filthy bamboo huts. Above it is the dead-line for negro settlement. No Yavisan has ever been above the Membrillo, a tributary of the Chucunaque, except a few that went with me; and none care to go. It has been traditional, beyond the memory of the in-

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habitants, that the negro caught above the Membrillo does not see his friends again.

The history of exploration in interior Darien is brief and to the point. There is a common factor in all the stories. In 1871 President Grant sent a certain Captain Selfridge with three hundred and seventy American sailors down the San Blas Coast and later up the Tuyra to survey the route of an interoceanic canal. They penetrated a little above Yavisa, but fell back with nothing but a good crop of alibis. In 1907 the German government sent seven "scientists" into the region from the Caribbean side—probably for the same reason. One fell sick and had to return early. The rest have not been heard from since. The San Blas Indians might be able to tell what happened to them. A little later thirty-five Panamanians attempted to ascend the Chucunaque in search of a "river of gold." Five returned alive. Soon after, three American adventurers from the Canal Zone repeated their attempt. Not one came back. So the Yavisa negroes are quite content to cultivate their gardens in peace, not at all curious about what may lie up the river above their village.

Thus the interior valley of Darien was protected by three lines of defense, besides the fact that no one clearly realized it was there at all. First, it was unapproachable by land. Second, the river which was supposed to lead to it was impossible to navigate. Third, the Indians had made good their policy of discouraging explorers. It was no wonder then, that this "blind spot" existed within a few hundred miles of the canal.

CHAPTER III

SOME TALES OF DARIEN

*

SO much for geography, economics, and history. I hope I've convinced the reader that Darien is not merely a part of the Canal Zone. But even if I have not, we'll return to my little coastal boat—diesel engine, negro crew—as she makes her way down the mud-fringed coast from Panama.

As soon as the docks and roofs of Panama City disappeared in the distance, all sorts of fascinating tales began to creep back into my memory about the mysterious land we were bound for. There is something about the sight of unexplored country which encourages uncritical belief, and back from the shore line the coast between the Chepo River and San Miguel Bay is as unknown as the day when Balboa stood on that well-known peak. Panama City is full of tales about it. No one who has lived in the Zone could have failed to hear some of them.

First there were the tales of gold—like those many other glittering tales heard all over tropical America. Rivers of gold, cities of gold, golden men, golden streets. There is certainly gold in Darien. The single mine at Cana on the upper Tuyra produced \$11,000,000 worth under British auspices in recent times, and much more under the earlier Spaniards. That was just one mine. There is plenty more waiting for the man who can find it and bring it out. I have found ample evidence of

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gold myself in many streams. All the Indian tribes possess golden ornaments. There are persistent tales of secret mines which were worked long before Columbus.

But unlucky is the white man or negro who goes into Indian country to look for gold. He is at once singled out for special treatment. Gold is an old story with the Indians. They realize clearly that most of their troubles in the past were caused by it. They understand the process. First comes the single prospector. Then comes the armed expedition which kills their men, rapes their women, and burns their villages. Then come the negro laborers imported to work the mines. Then mongrelization, misgovernment and oppression. So when a prospector appears in their country the Indians first give him fair warning to go back, and if he refuses, they "take steps." Every so often a tale drifts back to Panama City of an adventurous prospector who has disappeared into unknown territory with a spade and pan and not returned.

So much for gold. There are better tales for the more romantic and the less commercial. Here's one for the archeologist. The Indians on the Pacific coast believe firmly that somewhere in the tangled wilderness behind the mountains there is a stone city still inhabited by its builders—Mayans or some race equally mysterious. It has never been seen. The coast Indians are *persona non grata* in the interior. They only repeat the tales which have drifted out for them from the unknown.

And here's a tale for the big-game hunter who is tired of slaughtering inoffensive and accessible beasts in well-known Africa. In 1920 while I was in Panama an old and experienced American prospector, Shea by name, came to me with a strange story. He had just returned from a trip to southeastern Darien. With another American he had ascended the Sambu River which enters the sea on the southern shore of San Miguel Bay. The country here was, and still is, wholly unknown. Even

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the mountain range back from the coast did not appear on the maps. Shea and his companion worked their way with great difficulty to the headwaters of the Sambu, and there they became separated. The other American has not been heard from since.

When Shea lost his companion, he lost his canoe and most of his equipment. So instead of attempting to return down the Sambu, he decided to force his way to the Pacific across the "Andean Range" to the west. He reached the divide in a state of exhaustion and by a stroke of luck stumbled on an old Indian dugout abandoned on the bank of a small river running into Pinas Bay. It was nearly dark, so he camped for the night at a considerable altitude not far from the divide.

All that night he heard the footsteps of a large animal in the jungle above his camp. And when dawn came, he heard a curious chattering sound. He looked up and saw standing on the top of the bank an animal which appeared to his unscientific mind to be a cross between a negro and a gigantic ape. It was six feet tall, walked erect, weighed possibly three hundred pounds and was covered with long black hair. It was glaring down at him and chattering its teeth in rage.

Shea whipped out his revolver and shot it through the head. It tumbled down the bank and lay still beside his canoe. When Shea recovered from his fright he measured the animal crudely. It was heavily built like a gorilla, but the big toes on the feet were parallel with the other toes, as in a human being, not opposed like thumbs, as in all other monkeys and great apes.

Unfortunately Shea was too exhausted to bring any part of the animal back to civilization. He barely managed to get down to Pinas Bay on the Pacific and attract the attention of a coaster which took him to Panama more dead than alive. I saw him many times after that in the hospital where he

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eventually died of chronic malaria. Almost his last words were a solemn oath that the story of the "man-beast" was true.

Of course, my first reaction to this story was extreme skepticism. But I found to my surprise that many trustworthy men who had penetrated into the little-known parts of tropical America did not share my disbelief. The "man-beast" is reported to have been seen in many locations. A Spanish gold-hunting expedition in the seventeenth century reported that it had shot fourteen of them not far from this same Pinas Bay. The Indians from Ecuador to Nicaragua assert that the creatures inhabit isolated jungle-covered mountains, as do the gorillas in Africa. Nothing will persuade an Indian to spend the night on such a peak.

When I returned to Washington and mentioned the matter to Dr. Hough of the Smithsonian, I did not get the pitying smile I was expecting. On the contrary he said he had been getting reports of this sort for twenty years and was inclined to believe that there was something in them. Dr. Anthony of the New York Museum of Natural History has a story to tell of encountering a large unknown animal near the summit of Mt. Tacarcuna on the Colombian border. A Frenchman claims to have shot one in Ecuador.

The "man-beast" has nothing to do with this narrative proper. I never saw one myself. But the tale is a good illustration of how little is known about this part of the world. No explorer need sigh for more worlds to conquer. Instead of spending time and energy on the uninhabited and exceedingly barren polar regions those explorers could well turn their attention to tropical Latin America, where much richer fields await them.

Still other things came into my mind as we sailed down the coast, and the unnamed mountains of Darien paraded into sight. Perhaps not so important as the foregoing, but inter-

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esting nevertheless. There was the rumored picture-writing of the Tule Indians, which might hold the secret of the ancient Mayan alphabet. The terraced pyramids reported from the jungle. The weird lizards which skate upright on the surface of the water. The rocks in Darien Harbor which give forth music like great organs at high tide. There were plenty of things in Darien to take a rubber-hunter's mind off his humble business.

And then, of course, there were "white Indians." All Latin America is full of tales about them, from Mexico to the headwaters of the Amazon. The natives are almost universally convinced of their existence. It's a rare exploration tale which doesn't contain a discussion of them. Darien was said to be one of their chief centers.

But no living reliable person had ever seen a white Indian. No one had ever brought one out to civilization. And the whole subject had been so confused by unskillful fakers and fruitless quests, that the white Indians had become the type example of traveler's tale. The man who claimed to have seen them was considered *ipso facto* a liar, and the man who believed that some one else had seen them was considered gullible.

So I did not take the white Indians any more seriously than the "man-beast" or the stone city of the living Mayans. The fact that the Panamanians believed in them did not influence me. I knew a lot of other impossible myths which the Panamanians believed.

I had two American companions on this trip to Yavisa, but I am going to leave them nameless, for they don't fit very well into a story of tropical adventure. One was a Firestone rubber-buyer, whose experience had consisted of sitting in the bar of the elaborate Raffles Hotel at Singapore, changing into his thirty-five white linen suits (so he said) and examining

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sheets of crude rubber brought in for his approbation. His qualifications as an explorer approached the vanishing-point. The very sight of the jungle made him ill.

The other man was a lawyer—and nothing is more pathetic than an American lawyer in Latin America. My lawyer had been instructed to pass on titles and report on “law and order.” His experience so far had indicated that there were at least ten titles to every piece of land in Panama, and no “law and order” whatever beyond sight of the Canal. His hopes were dwindling away.

After the somewhat ominous episodes of the near-mutiny and the machete attack of the patriotic Indian, my companions developed considerable pessimism. There was no decent rubber land, they said, in sight on the shore of San Miguel Bay. Nothing but swamps backed up by tumbled hills. As for law and order—they didn’t see any either.

I hadn’t felt it necessary to pass on to them the more picturesque fears of the crew—about the piratical nature of the Yavisa negroes or the reputation of the Indians in the interior. But they must have gathered a general impression, for as we penetrated deeper into Darien Harbor, their doubts grew loud. The channel was obviously dangerous from a shipping point of view—scoured by tremendous tidal currents which whirled the boat about like a chip in a mill-race. The rainfall might be adequate, but to judge from the character of the vegetation, it seemed to be concentrated in a single season. My belief in an unknown interior valley did not impress them. It might be there all right, but there was nothing to show that it was not cut up into ravines and ridges like the rest of Panama. My own enthusiasm, of course, was increasing. I was anxious to make a determined assault on the interior valley. But I think my companions realized by this time that rubber had taken a subordinate position in my mind.

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They were all for returning at once to the Canal Zone, where khaki uniforms on every street corner give a splendid sense of security.

During the several days while we were feeling our way up the 110 miles of interior waterways, my companions sank deeper into a nervous funk. They did not remove their clothes at night, not even their shoes. They locked themselves into their hot, stuffy, little staterooms instead of making themselves comfortable on deck. They never went ashore at the picturesque settlements of perfectly harmless Chola Indians. These silly precautions had the usual effect of increasing their nervousness, and they were soon in a very unhappy state of mind. As an ultimatum they announced that they would go to Yavisa only because they agreed to. But unless the terrain improved greatly from a rubber growing point of view they would depart at once and condemn as hopeless the whole Republic of Panama.

CHAPTER IV
THREE WHITE GIRLS

*

FINALLY we arrived at Yavisa, a straggling collection of some fifty ramshackle bamboo huts beside the stream—black babies everywhere, flies, mangy dogs, garbage, rubbish and mud. We anchored in mid-stream and I went ashore alone in our small dingy, fully prepared for some sort of piratical attack. But nothing unpleasant assailed me except some stupendous bad smells. Yavisa was far from attractive, but the inhabitants seemed peaceful in the extreme. I decided that the crew had been exhibiting the universal tendency of primitive people to suspect their neighbors. Both they and the Yavisans were degenerate blacks, less civilized than when they came from Africa. They felt about the next tribe over the horizon as their ancestors had felt for thousands of jungle years.

I had no difficulty finding the headman—an old negro who seemed to possess a measure of authority. He showed me proudly around the village, pointing out the local features of interest like a New Yorker showing off the Empire State building. Yes, he admitted, there was certainly a wide fertile valley up the Chucunaque. He had been part way up toward it; but the savage Indians up-river would kill any negro who ventured above the Membrillo tributary.

While we were discussing these matters, we reached the upper end of the village, where the jungle began again. I

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wasn't paying much attention to the scenery. Yavisa could be duplicated a hundred times in Panama. But for some reason I happened to look into a small clearing which extended a few yards into the encompassing jungle. I don't think I rubbed my eyes. People don't do that. But it is a figure of speech well fitted to the occasion.

Across the narrow clearing were walking three young girls, perhaps fourteen to sixteen years old. They wore nothing but small loin-clothes. And their almost bare bodies were as white as any Scandinavian's. Their long hair, falling loosely over their shoulders, was bright gold! Quickly and gracefully they crossed the open space and disappeared into the jungle.

I turned to the negro headman in amazement. *White Indians!* The one tale of Latin America in which no respectable explorer dares to believe!

The headman did not seem to consider the sight unusual.

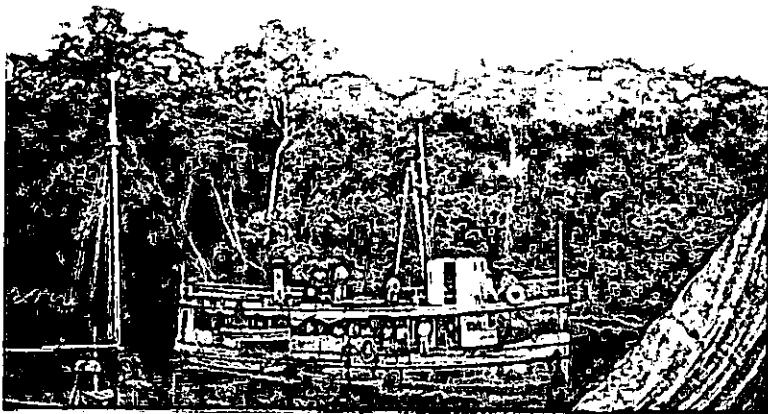
"They come from a tribe which lives in the mountains up the Chucunaque," he said in explanation. "Before this they haven't come so far down the valley. But a little time ago they built a house above our village, and families of them come down to trade with us. Some are white. Some are dark like other Indians."

"Take me to their house," I asked.

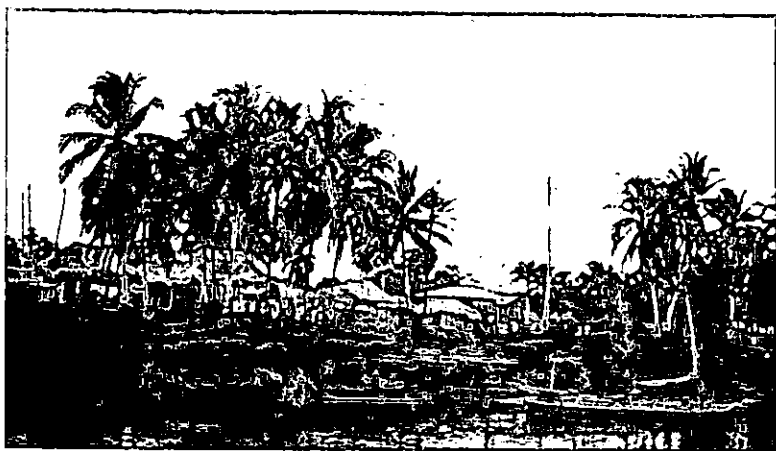
The negro shook his head with great decision. "No. They would kill me," he said. "They will kill any black man if he goes near their house. But perhaps they will not kill you. You are white. Just follow the trail the girls took."

Without thinking of possible consequences I followed the trail into the jungle.

This act was not nearly as rash as it seems, and as it probably seemed to the headman. Long experience with little-known Indians in other parts of Latin America had taught me various things about them. When they are in contact and



Our First Trip to Yavisa



*Negro Village of Yavisa, Last Known Outpost
on Lower Chucunaque*

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conflict with blacks, they are apt to be comparatively friendly toward Europeans of fair complexion. Furthermore I was dressed all in white—the color of peace in the jungle. Khaki is the color of the professional soldier throughout the Americas, and is no color to be worn in any free Indian country unless the wearer is well prepared for trouble. Also I carried no fire-arms. I was not hunting, and there is nothing to fear from wild animals in any American jungle.

The trail was a well-beaten path along the river-bank. After passing through dense jungle for a quarter of a mile it ended in a clearing on the edge of the water. In the center was a typical Indian house of the smaller type—platform of split palms on posts six feet above the ground, thatched roof, open walls. A notched log served as front steps.

The three girls I had just seen were kneeling on the platform arranging some grass mats. At my appearance they jumped to their feet and seemed about to leap from the platform into the jungle beyond the house.

I approached them slowly, smiling my best. Gradually their fear changed to curiosity, then to interest, then to friendliness. They began to giggle like school-girls and finally broke out into gay laughter, apparently more amused by my appearance than afraid of me.

I reached into my pockets and brought out a handful of shiny Panama dimes which I carried for just such occasions. Many tropical Indians value such coins as ornaments or make them into ear-rings, bracelets, etc.... The girls descended the notched log one by one and gathered around me with every expression of confidence. I divided the dimes among them, and they laughed over their new treasures like the trusting children they were.

I tried to talk to them in Spanish but got no response. Then I tried English, French, and some very crude German.

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Not that there was much chance that they would understand, but I didn't want to pass up any possibility. They shook their heads.

Their inability to talk any of my languages did not seem to shake their confidence in me. I examined their skin closely to make sure it was not colored artificially. It was not. I looked at their golden hair, which was of a much finer texture than the coarse hair of other Indians. Their eyes were hazel or bluish-brown.

White Indians? I remembered the tales of such people—tales from all over Latin America. And also I remembered the universal derision with which such tales were received. But these were certainly Indians. And they were most certainly white. They were not albinos in the commonly accepted meaning of the term—for albinos have white hair, wholly colorless skin, pink eyes, and blue gums. My three little girls looked like healthy Norwegians, not biological monstrosities. Neither were they the half-breed offspring of some American gold prospector. I'd seen plenty of these, and they were invariably dark.

I got back to the boat about dusk, naturally bursting with my discovery. But my companions would hear nothing about unknown valleys, white Indians or anything else. They were in an ultimatum state of mind. While I was away, some of the crew had gone ashore and heard from the Yavisa negroes about the strange Indians up-river, how they would kill any one who ventured into their country. The news had spread. My companions were nervously awaiting my return and were determined to up-anchor immediately and drop down to the wider waters of the Tuyra twelve miles below.

I'm afraid the next few minutes must have sounded like a quarrel. My companions refused to believe in a large level valley beyond. Yavisa lies just at the end of a cleft in the western range of mountains and the valley can be seen only from

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around a bend in the river. No suitable rubber land was in sight, my companions agreed, and if there *were* rubber land, it would take an army to conquer it before the first tree could be planted. Loudly they insisted that the trip was over. They pronounced Darien without rubber land and without law. They were determined to start home at once.

My tale of the white Indian girls did not interest them in the slightest. They were not "damned jungle rats," and they wouldn't go further up the Chucunaque for a million dollars. If "the Old Man"—meaning Henry Ford—wanted that place explored, he would have to hire another outfit.

I pleaded with them—I think in a rather calm manner at first. But when I saw I wasn't getting anywhere, I tried stronger measures. In fact, I told them that before I'd allow the boat to drop down river, I'd go below and smash the Diesel engine. In which case we would have to stay at Yavisa a long, long time. That calmed them. It would have calmed me too if it had been actually carried through. So we compromised on staying in Yavisa until five o'clock the next afternoon. This would give us time to return to the Tuyra before sunset. It isn't pleasant to risk the snags of the Chucunaque in the dark.

We had a comparatively peaceful supper—not exactly cordial however. Soon darkness came. Then a glorious full moon. My companions retired to their stuffy cabins (fully dressed, as usual), while I set up my army cot on the after deck and got down to my lightest pajamas.

But I could not sleep. I thought of the undiscovered valley just beyond; then of my little friends, the Indian girls with Swedish complexions. Then I suddenly remembered. Good Lord! What about the poor Indian trussed up in the hold! I got my flash-light, went down the companionway, and woke up the negro engineer.

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Yes, he said, the devil was still in the hold. No. He had been given no food or water. If he were still alive when the boat got back to Panama City, the Captain was going to turn him over to the police. He'd better die quick.

Without saying another word I slipped the engineer an American five-dollar bill. That's a language all Panamanians understand. I told him I wanted to see the Indian. There was a locked bulkhead door between the engine-room and the cargo-hold. The negro engineer unlocked it, and I entered. There lay the Indian, still tightly bound, flat on his back, but alive. When his eyes met mine, they were dull and lifeless as a toad's. The fires were out. He knew he was going to die. I was just another of his tormentors.

I went back to the engine-room and told the negro to get me some water. When it came, I went back to the cargo-hold and knelt beside the Indian. He watched me distrustfully. Then I cut the ropes around his arms and put the water to his lips. He gulped it down eagerly, his eyes wide and incredulous. Then I cut the rest of the ropes. He sat up. Like two flashes of lightning his eyes came alive with amazement and wondering gratitude. That look will remain with me to my last day as one of my pleasantest memories.

In a whisper I told the engineer to go up on deck. Then I took the Indian by the hand and led him to a side hatch which opened on the river from the engine-room. Some people say Indians are stolid and unemotional. They would change their opinion if they had seen the expression of this one. I motioned to the hatch, and he plunged through it into the river with a clean splash. It might have been one of the crocodiles forever cruising around the boat.

I watched him disappear in the darkness. Then I went up to the pilot-house to find the Captain sitting with a pot of his eternal black coffee. He poured out a cup for me. Not

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a word passed between us, but I put twenty-five dollars in American bills in his hand. We sat for half an hour without a word, drinking cup after cup of thick coffee, a rather puzzled look on the Captain's face. Then I left with a "*Buenas noches, Capitan.*"

When I left the Captain, I intended to sleep. But there are times when sleep comes only to the very unimaginative. I was in an uplifted state of mind. A few miles away lay an unexplored, mysterious country. Who knew what it might contain? I may be a confirmed romantic, but the thought kept me wide awake.

It was one of those perfect nights which happen only in the tropics. From the steep, wooded hillside opposite Yavisa came the twittering and squawking of birds—the chattering of little fruit monkeys, and the lion-like roars of big howler monkeys. Some insect, probably a cicada, kept whistling for all the world like a toy steam-engine. All the jungle is full of life on a moonlight night. Only men sleep.

I pulled on sneakers and stepped over the side of the boat into a small dingy and rowed ashore. Yavisa was asleep. Even by moonlight it looked like what it was—the hideaway of the descendants of runaway slaves and negro outlaws. I passed through the street of filthy bamboo huts in a moment and found the trail I had taken by daylight. I had reached the little Indian hut in the clearing and was standing before the notched log before I realized the rashness and bad manners of my action. It was nearly midnight. No one in the jungle makes a call after dark for any ordinary reason. Certainly not in pajamas where young girls are involved.

But I had come too far to turn back. To retreat suddenly, I thought, would be to admit that my motives were not the best. So I called and waved a white handkerchief. I knocked on the notched log. Not a sound from above. Then suddenly

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the body of a full-grown man, whether white or dark I could not tell, crashed into the jungle from the platform. Then again total silence.

At last I realized that I'd better get out of there. My motives were certainly suspected. The man was perhaps circling around to cut me off, and might send an arrow or a dart through me as I returned to the village. Ignominiously I retreated down the trail, reached the boat in safety, kicking myself for my foolishness, and managed to get a little sleep during the rest of the night.



CHAPTER V

A GLIMPSE OF THE CHUCUNAUQUE

*

AS soon as it got light the next morning, I fixed the Elto motor to the stern of our little flat-bottomed skiff, and loaded into her ten gallons of gasoline and a basket of lunch. I had decided to take the negro engineer up the Chucunaque with me. He seemed to have more courage and ability than any one else in the outfit.

But to my surprise my American companions appeared on deck and asked if they might go too. Probably they were a bit ashamed of the appearance they had made the day before. Neither of them was really lacking in courage. I should give them a good deal of credit for finally coming through. This jaunt up the Chucunaque probably looked a lot more dangerous to them than it did to me. I had been in the tropics long enough to learn to take negro accounts of savage Indians with a grain of salt.

The four of us got away early and started up stream. We had no particular difficulty in negotiating the rather mild rapids above Yavisa, and then we entered into smooth, deep, almost slack water. It was a beautiful stream, about a hundred yards wide with occasional easy rapids followed by long stretches of still water. Here and there were little clearings with plantations of corn, plantains, and other native crops. In the center of each was a thatched hut like the one occu-

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pied by the white Indians. Every now and then we caught glimpses of a naked brown body disappearing into the green tangle of the surrounding jungle. How they must have marveled at the out-board motor, the first to enter their river! But they made no move to attack us. The "dead-line" of the Membrillo lay far above.

The bordering hills which came right down to the river's edge at Yavisa fell back as we ascended. Through gaps in the jungle caused by small tributaries we could see the mountains miles back. The river bed was of shale in horizontal layers. The banks were of rich sandy loam ten feet thick—plenty of room for the central tap-root of the rubber tree.

More perfect rubber land could not be found in all the world. The giant Cuipo trees proved that the rainfall was ample. Splendid mahoganies five or six feet in diameter rose fifty feet to their first branch. Wild rubber trees grew on the banks, their feeder roots exposed by erosion. The ground was high and well-drained, with a uniform gentle slope to the encircling mountains. Even the lawyer grew enthusiastic.

But I couldn't keep my mind on rubber. The Chucunaque Valley is one of the most beautiful places in the world, and it seemed especially beautiful to me because I was one of the very few white men to see it. The trees along the shore were full of singing birds. (It's an ancient slander that tropical birds don't sing. They do.) Troops of different sorts of monkeys scolded us from the banks. There were hanging-oriole nests, and great black-and-white herons roosted on the taller trees.

Occasional tapir tracks led down to the water and reappeared on the farther bank. The tapir is to me one of the most fascinating of all animals. He is a pachyderm, related to the elephant. He is as big as a small cow with a figure like a fattened hog. He may weigh six hundred pounds, and leaves a three-toed track like a gigantic bird.

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Among other things he has solved one of nature's greatest problems—how to get across rivers. When he comes to one, he merely walks down the bank into the water, continues walking on the bottom under water, no matter how deep it is, and out on the other side. You can see his tracks in the mud in the middle of the stream.

By noon we had made twenty-five miles without any trouble at all. We landed on the bank and had lunch. Our perfect rubber-valley was there all right. Perhaps the lawyer was working out questions of land titles, labor, transportations, and defense. But I had ceased to care if Akron got its rubber or not. I didn't want this lovely wild valley to be overrun by thousands of degenerate Jamaica negroes like those who worked on the Panama Canal. I didn't want its harmless and attractive Indians oppressed and exterminated. It was "my valley." Already I was feeling possessive toward it and its people, although as yet I knew very little about them. I had deduced its existence from a distance. Now I had seen it, and the sight of it was good.

After lunch we returned down stream. With our rudimentary equipment it would be impossible to go farther, for the river was narrowing and the rapids becoming more formidable. The return trip was quick and uneventful and we were back at Yavisa by late afternoon.

Our little trip up the Chucunaque had certainly been peaceful enough. We had caught glimpses of a few Indians, but they had shown no signs of hostile intentions. I was wondering a little, when we approached our boat, what it was the Yavisa negroes were so much afraid of. They were convinced that up the river lived a particularly dangerous tribe of warlike Indians—white and brown. We hadn't seen any, but my companions were still convinced of their existence and their dangerousness.

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The return to Panama City was an anti-climax. We dropped down to the mouth of the Chucunaque at dusk, and here we should have anchored for the night. But the Captain, the crew, and my American companions were all bent on getting as far away from Yavisa as soon as possible. So we ran down the treacherous Tuyra all night, aided by an intermittent moon, bumping numerous logs and snags, and made the deep water of Darien Harbor by daylight. From there to Panama City we ran into bad weather and had to anchor over night in the lee of one of the Pearl Islands.

At Panama City my two companions decided to condemn the whole Republic of Panama for large-scale rubber growing. There might be rubber land in plenty, they admitted, but Henry Ford was no *Conquistador*.

This took something of a load off my mind. I have spent much of my life surveying wild parts of the world for various commercial interests, but I have never wholeheartedly applauded the onward march of civilization. In tropical America the net result is usually the replacement of the attractive free Indians by a degenerate population of negro semi-slaves. Indians are too independent and self-respecting to work under such conditions. They prefer to emigrate or die. Negroes hate work, but they can be driven to it.

So my American companions got on the first boat for the United States, leaving me behind to figure out how I could get back to the Chucunaque under more broad-minded, less commercial auspices. The first thing I did was to call on Governor General Morrow (brother of Dwight Morrow) to give him a report of my geographical findings. In the course of our conversation I mentioned finding a strange type of white people in the interior. And here I got my first sight of an expression I have seen on many men's faces since. It may be

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described as "sad." Governor Morrow was skeptical. He was nice about it. He didn't want to hint that I was lying or in the last stages of malaria. But his face showed plainly that the very mention of white Indians was painful to him. I shut up completely. A year later he was to give my white Indians a splendid reception in the Administration Building of the Canal Zone. But now he was "sad."

Next I called on General Babbit, Commandant at Quarry Heights and ranking army officer in the Zone, through whom I had borrowed my map making instruments. I gave him a copy of my map, a complete geographical report on what we had found and said I would like to tell him about some strange primitive white people we had encountered—if only he wouldn't be "sad" about it.

At once he was all attention. General Babbit was both a soldier and a scholar (a not too common combination), with a hobby for ethnology. I wish there were more like him in the service. The U. S. Army has missed some rare opportunities for valuable ethnological work in the Philippines, Panama, and Nicaragua.

"Go ahead and tell me," he said. "I'm interested." So I told him all I knew—almost. As my Indian friends are fond of saying—"Never tell anybody all you know."

"Marsh," he replied. "I believe you, and I'll tell you why. As you probably know, we maintain a secret wireless station on the Caribbean coast near Colombia. At least it's supposed to be secret. About twice a month we send an airplane down there with mail. These planes are supposed to fly first to Colon, then follow the Caribbean coast to the station. Just recently I sent a Lieutenant Arnold on the trip. He broke the rules and flew straight across the interior. The clouds forced him to fly very low. When he returned, he reported orally to me that he had passed over a village in the interior which was

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inhabited by white-skinned people living like Indians. Arnold is one of my best men. What are you going to do about it?"

I told him that I was going back to the United States and organize a scientific expedition to comb interior Darien.

"Good!" he said. "I'll give you all the assistance the Army can supply."

My next expedition was off to a flying start.



CHAPTER VI

THE MARSH-DARIEN EXPEDITION

*

SOME day some one will write a book about scientific expeditions and how they are organized. But I'm not going into this interesting subject here. I got my expedition moving finally, and have nothing to complain about.

The first thing I did after reaching the United States was to report to my employers, Ford and Firestone, advocating a thorough investigation of Darien, not only from a rubber point of view, but in a well-rounded scientific manner. Darien was one of the "blind spots" of the western hemisphere, about which we knew almost nothing.

But Ford and Firestone were not interested. They were concerned only with rubber, and they had decided, on the recommendation of their representatives, to abandon Darien. They offered to send me to the Philippines, to Liberia, or the Amazon. But I refused, as I had determined to get back to Darien as quickly as possible.

I was no longer interested primarily in rubber, although I realized that its consideration was necessary to help secure financial support. Fortunately another great industrialist, who happened to be a personal friend of mine, provided ample funds for the new venture.

The University of Rochester, the American Museum of Natural History of New York, and the Smithsonian Institution

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of Washington, D. C., designated competent scientists to join the expedition. The Departments of Commerce and War at Washington gave their support. President Belisario Porras of Panama enthusiastically coöperated, as did the Canal Zone administration. Our personnel, assembled on the Canal Zone, was as follows:

1. Leader: Richard O. Marsh.
2. Prof. J. L. Baer, anthropologist and ethnologist, representing the Smithsonian Institution.
3. Dr. C. M. Breder, Jr., ichthyologist and naturalist, representing the American Museum of Natural History, New York.
4. Dr. H. L. Fairchild, geologist, representing the University of Rochester, N. Y.
5. Dr. Raoul Brin, botanist, and soil expert, representing President Porras of Panama.
6. Charles Charlton, photographer.
7. Paul Benton, writer.
8. Major Harry Johnson, retired army man, naturalist and taxidermist.
9. Major Omer Malsbury, topographer and engineer, representing the Canal Zone Administration.
10. Lieutenant Glen Townsend, on the staff of General Connor, representing the U. S. Military Intelligence.
11. Lieutenant Rosebaum, U. S. Army, West Pointer, representing the U. S. Military Intelligence.
12. Corp. Murphy, U. S. Signal Corps, wireless operator.
13. Private Pabom, orderly to Lieutenant Townsend.
14. A Panaman military captain, name withheld, representing the Government of Panama.

Others: A Panama cook and cook's assistant, two Alabama negroes, several Panama negro laborers.

THE MARSH-DARIEN EXPEDITION

We were splendidly equipped with all reasonable requirements. The scientists had the necessary instruments and paraphernalia. From the States we had brought two of the latest model Elto outboard motors—a vast supply of presents for the Indians:—trinkets from the ten-cent stores, knives, machetes, axes, tools, two portable victrolas with a large and varied assortment of records.

In the Canal Zone we were given the privileges of the Government Commissary Stores and we stocked up with tropical supplies—medicines, food, bolts of gay cotton cloth, fireworks, mosquito bars, gasoline and oil in sealed five gallon cans, etc.

The War Department had given us access to the army supply warehouses on the Canal Zone. From there we got tents, cots, a portable military kitchen, a field radio set, and other useful things. We had fire-arms and ammunition enough for a field military force, as indeed we technically were through special authorization of President Porras.

Best of all, General Patrick, in charge of the Air Service of the War Department at Washington, had provided us with letters instructing the Army Air Service of the Canal Zone to give us all reasonable assistance and coöperation.

But unfortunately for us my friend General Babbit had been succeeded as Commander in Chief of the American military forces in the Canal Zone by General Sturgis—a “hard boiled” soldier with apparently no interest in any field outside of his military duties, unless it were golf, which engrossed most of his attention.

CHAPTER VII

AIRPLANE SURVEY

*

AS soon as I got to the Zone, I paid formal calls on Governor General Morrow, General Sturgis, and President Porras. Then I took my letters from General Patrick to Major Walsh, ranking commander of the Canal Zone Air Force, who proved very enthusiastic. I explained that I first wanted to make a reconnaissance flight right down through the heart of interior Darien and verify the existence and extent of the interior valley I had found a few months before. On later flights I wanted to skirt the flanks of the mountain ranges and locate from the air all interior Indian villages and settlements, so we would know what to aim for with our land expedition.

Of course, in all interior Darien there is not a single location where an airplane can land, either on the ground or on water. The land is covered with high dense jungle, while the streams are too narrow, too crooked and with too many rapids and snags to permit a landing by hydroplane. The reconnaissance trip as blocked out would cover between four hundred and five hundred miles, nearly the maximum range of the planes then available on the Zone.

But Major Walsh asked— "When do you want to start?" I replied, "As soon as possible." "All right," he said, "be on the Coco Solo flying field at 7 A.M. tomorrow and we will be ready for you."

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mountain range, running due east and about 2,500 feet high. To the south we could see the beginnings of another range, rising from low hills to tall peaks farther on. Directly below us the Bayano River ran crookedly through a deep gorge in a tangle of ridges and spurs branching off from the two ranges. For many miles it was white with swirling rapids, snags, and rocks. One mystery at least was cleared up. Those rapids are the reason why the northwestern entrance into the central valley of Darien has been so effectively blocked against four centuries of Spanish and Panamanian exploration. It would be hopeless to attempt them by canoe. The land route would be impossible even without opposition from the Indians. The airplane is the only method which can cope with the difficulties of the upper Bayano.

This rugged land and almost impassable river course extended for about fifteen miles, apparently totally uninhabited.

All this time I was plotting on my map the topography of mountains and valleys, noting principally the increasing magnitude of the mountain range to the south—a range not shown on any existing map of Darien.

Then the transverse broken ranges fell back from the river course and we entered over a wide open valley continually becoming more level between increasingly high and sheer knife-like parallel ranges twenty-five miles apart. To the southeast the unknown range culminated in an immense three-peaked mountain which was certainly the peak I had triangulated on from the Pacific side several months previously. The river below, now flowing through flat land, took the sinuous curves of a huge snake.

We continued to fly southeastward, keeping near the center of the great valley and between the diverging main tributaries of the Bayano. The northern tributary soon branched into the foothills of the main San Blas Range, and we lost sight of it.

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I was there at 7 A.M. next morning. Major Walsh had provided two De Haviland two seated open planes. They were the type referred to by pilots as "flying coffins," but were the best planes then available on the Canal Zone. Their maximum range of flight was only from five hundred to six hundred miles.

My plane was piloted by Lt. Birnn. The other plane, piloted by Lt. Curry, carried Sgt. Dawkins, an expert military photographer, and was equipped with a large military airplane camera. I had with me a cavalry topographical outfit, sketching board, compass, telescope, and clinometer. The plane, of course, had its aneroid for altitude determination.

It was arranged that the plane carrying Lt. Birnn and myself should lead the way about a quarter of a mile ahead of the second plane and that when we made a circle or a spiral downward, it was to be a signal for the following plane to take a photograph.

We hopped off from Coco Solo and headed for France Field, the airport at the Pacific end of the Canal. Here we filled the tanks with gas and oil and hopped off again for unknown country. At last we were on our way to Darien.

We headed a little north of east, toward the inland village of Chepo a few miles from the river of the same name. This village is the eastern limit of the settled and occupied area around the Canal Zone and is connected with Panama City by a dirt road passable at times. The country between is fairly level grassland, locally known as "the Savannas" and devoted chiefly to cattle raising.

After passing Chepo, we headed due east up the Bayano valley. The terrain changed to dense jungle. For fifteen miles or so we could see unmistakable negro huts and small plantations along the river banks. Then they disappeared abruptly. We were over free Indian country.

About ten miles north of us was the main San Blas

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Along the banks of the southern tributary, known to the Darien Indians as the Cañaxa, and along one of its northerly branches, we could sight almost continuous plantation clearings surrounding large Indian houses—extending almost fifteen miles. These houses were rectangular, very large, with walls rising flush from the ground, but never congregated closely together in village groups, as is characteristic of the Tule settlements everywhere else in Darien.

Soon we approached the ultimate headwaters of the Bayano River system. My two pilots had been skeptical of my theory of a great interior valley containing the river systems of both the Bayano and the Chucunaque. They relied upon the standard published maps of the Republic of Panama, with their imaginary topography of interior Darien, which showed a massive mountain range separating the headwaters of the two river systems. Just before our flight they were still arguing as to whether we would have to climb two or three or five thousand feet to cross that divide.

But there was no such mountain divide. The two valleys merged into each other imperceptibly, the small streams winding about so intricately that it was impossible to tell to which river system they belonged. We were now twenty miles to the east of the great mountain peak in the southern range, and presently we could see a gap in the ridge, four miles wide and extending clear down to sea-level. Through this gap we could get a clear view straight south as far as the eye could reach. This was the Savanna River. If it were a river of water instead of a river of mud, the Savanna would be a very easy entrance into the mysterious country we had just flown over. But until some sort of mud-boat is invented, it will offer no help to the explorer.

North of the mountain gap, within the interior valley proper, the headwaters of the Savanna rise into beautiful

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higher land. In fact, from an airplane above, it is impossible to distinguish between the upper headwaters of the Bayano, the Chucunaque and the Savanna.

On a lower tributary, unmistakably an affluent of the Savanna, we discovered another group of entirely different settlements. These were large isolated houses on both banks of the river, separated from each other by a couple of hundred yards, some round, some rectangular, all elevated upon posts above ground, and surrounded by extensive plantations. They were unmistakably Chocoi Indian settlements—the largest and most prosperous looking found anywhere in Darien.

On through the interior valley we flew, now bending more to the southeast. Darien as a whole describes a quarter-circle segment of arc, with the westerly end at the top of the circle and the easterly end at the right of the circle—an arc extending well over into the Atrato River basin of Colombia, three hundred or more miles in total length.

We were now unmistakably over the southerly headwaters of the Chucunaque River. On the river branch below, which I later identified as the Artigarti, we soon passed over an enormous "long house," on the south bank facing the tributary, but with no surrounding smaller houses or plantations. Months later we found a similar great isolated "long house" among the Cuna Indians of the Pucro River, which was used as a ceremonial tribal house or meeting place for neighboring tribes on special rare occasions.

Several miles further on we passed over a small, apparently deserted village, also on the south bank. Four rectangular Tule type houses in good condition fronted on the river thirty or forty yards back from the bank, but the paths from the houses to the river were overgrown with jungle grass. There were no canoes on the shore in front—always an invariable

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sign of the presence of inhabitants. The village was unmistakably abandoned.

I speculated on whether war, famine, or disease had depopulated that substantial looking little settlement. Later I was to realize that it may have been merely one of the "suburban type" villages prevalent among the Tules, which are occupied only during certain seasons of the year.

From the remote headwaters of the Chucunaque, clear down almost to Yavisa near its mouth, a distance of over fifty miles in an air line, we saw no more villages, plantations, or evidences of human habitation. The main valley of the Chucunaque is, as far as we or any one else knows, uninhabited. Yet for agricultural purposes on a grand scale, it is the most favorable region in all Darien.

The valley here was nearly thirty miles wide, and very level. The Chucunaque described great sinuous loops and curves, as customary with a river flowing through flat land. The main San Blas mountain range to the east averaged perhaps 2,500 feet high, with individual peaks of nearly five thousand feet.

The Pacific side range had settled down to a quite uniform ridge of about 1,500 feet elevation. No low gaps through the San Blas Range could be seen from our course, but three more appeared in the Pacific Range. They were smaller than the great gap of the Savanna, but like it dropped down almost to sea-level. They corresponded exactly with my observations from the boat as it ascended the Tuyra River.

We kept over the Chucunaque, which here flows nearer the Pacific Range than the San Blas Range. The Pacific Range was a smooth sheer upthrust wedge with a sharp crest and no foothills, while the San Blas Range showed many irregularities, numerous foothills, and small lateral valleys. We learned later that there were plenty of Indians on these small streams, but

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the wide level valley of the Chucunaque itself was wholly uninhabited.

Without seeing a house or a clearing we arrived over that part of the river which I had explored in the skiff five months earlier. I had planned to circle and dip in salute over the house of the white Indian girls on the outskirts of Yavisa, then proceed on south another fifty miles to the ancient gold mine at Cana, returning over the central valley to the Canal Zone. I had not completed my mapping, and there were many things I wanted to get a second look at.

But suddenly Lieutenant Birnn waved his hand frantically and passed back a written note. "Radiator leaking. Engine getting hot. Don't know when it may stall."

Sure enough! I held my hand out over the edge of the cockpit and could feel the fine spray blown back from the engine. Our planes were equipped with the old-type "pre-historic" water-cooled motors.

I was bitterly disappointed, but this was no place for a stalled engine. I wrote back, "Use your own judgment." I was no aviator, just a passenger. Lieutenant Birnn answered, "Think we'd better make for the coast. May pick up a boat if we crash."

The plane swerved sharply to the right and headed westward for one of the low gaps in the Pacific Range. Soon we were over the brackish swamp between the mountains and the Tuyra. The indicator on the engine thermostat rose to the red "danger zone" and stayed there. We headed out to the coast through Darien Harbor and San Miguel Bay.

A plane with a faulty motor over inhospitable country is a poor observation post. There is too much on the observer's mind. I got only a brief look at the country to the south of the Tuyra, but this was enough to confirm my suspicion that the maps of it were wholly imaginary. Then we swung north-



A San Blas Village: Navagandi



View of San Blas Coast

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ward toward Panama City. We saw nothing of importance on the way—in fact we were thinking more about the motor than about the muddy coast-line beneath us.

The motor did not fail. The leak did not enlarge and we arrived in Panama City with the gas nearly gone and the radiator practically empty. Twice had I been driven back from interior Darien. Once by the fears of my "rubber expert" companions. The second time by the threat of a leaky radiator. I was to break that spell on the next venture.

Now let us briefly review the results of this four hundred mile reconnaissance by airplane over Darien.

We found an interior level valley approximately one hundred and twenty-five miles long, averaging twenty-five miles wide, extending from thirty miles east of the Chepo River to the mouth of the Chucunaque River. The highest elevation of this valley, in the neighborhood of the headwaters of the Bayano, Savanna and Chucunaque rivers, was not over three hundred and fifty feet above sea-level.

This valley was protected from the north and east by the continuous curved San Blas Mountain Range, guarded by the coastal San Blas Indians who permitted no strangers to penetrate through their territory.

On the south and west it was protected by the high and impassable "Porras-Marsh" Range, containing four low gaps, one exuding the "mud-glacier" of the Savanna River, and the other three debouching into impassable, brackish, crocodile-infested swamps extending to the Tuyra River and Darien Harbor.

The western entry to the valley up the Bayano is blocked by fifteen miles of transverse mountain ridges through which the Bayano cuts a gorge almost impassable for any party carrying a large amount of equipment.

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The southeast entry up the Chucunaque offers the only feasible route of entry for a large party; but the lower Tuyra with its bordering low brackish swamps, swift current and recurrent tidal bores, is a difficult and tedious passage for any craft not propelled by a modern engine powerful enough to "buck" those alternating currents. No wonder this interior valley has remained practically unknown until the present day.

The great bulk of the Chucunaque valley we found apparently uninhabited until we neared its mouth at Yavisa. As for the parallel mountain ranges and their slopes, we still had no direct knowledge as to whether or not they were inhabited. Close inspection of those flanking mountains had been left for later reconnaissance flights.

CHAPTER VIII

MILITARY RED TAPE

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FURTHER reconnaissance flights! Here is a chance for another interesting book which I shall not write—about the workings of a certain type of military mind. But I shall tell enough to explain partially why the army aviators—brave and enterprising men—have not yet explored the unknown regions near their bases on the Canal Zone.

As soon as I got back to Panama, I reported to General Sturgis, successor to General Babbit as ranking army officer in the Zone. I expressed my thanks and appreciation for the flight over interior Darien.

"What?" he cried. "You've flown over interior Darien?"

"Yes," I said, somewhat taken aback.

"By what *authority*," he cried, "did you make this flight?"

I don't like that word "authority" when I hear it from an army officer, so I answered very mildly. I explained that General Patrick, head of the Air Service in the War Department at Washington, had written a letter to Major Walsh, head of the Air Service in the Canal Zone, directing him to give me all possible coöperation. I had presented this letter to Major Walsh and his staff. And the Major had told me to report at seven the next morning for the flight. The official negotiations had been very easy and simple.

"But you had no *authority* to make such a flight without

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my permission. Major Walsh has no *authority* to make flights without my approval. Such flights must be approved by *me*; then sanctioned by the Panamanian Government through the intercession of the American Legation. You have put me in a very humiliating position, subject to criticism by the Panamanian Government."

President Porras, I thought, would be rather amused at this. But I did not smile. I told the General that the President was my friend, and that I would see him at once and ward off the threatened criticism. I hastened over to the Presidential Palace and described the whole squabble to President Porras. He laughed delightedly. Evidently the General's discomfiture was not entirely unpleasant to him. He immediately drew up an order appointing me his military representative in Darien. Then he dictated three letters of instruction addressed to the *Altos-Comisionados* or High Commissioners of the Lower Bayano, the Upper Bayano and the Upper Chucunaque, informing such imaginary officials that I was conducting an investigation of interior Darien under Presidential approval, and that such *Altos-Comisionados* should hold themselves subject to my orders, and give me whatever assistance I requested.

Handing these letters to me, President Porras said, "Now, my good friend, show these letters to your General and tell him you have my authorization to go anywhere and do anything you please in Darien."

It did not matter that both the President and I knew that there were no such *Altos-Comisionados* in Darien. Presumably when I met anybody there whose services I required, I was first to appoint him *Altos-Commisionado* and then direct him to do as I wanted. (I tried that later on a Cuna Bravo sub-chief, carefully translating the President's order, but the sub-chief disdainfully answered that he took his orders only from his Indian superiors.)

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President Porras and I thoroughly understood each other. It happened that I had been the direct cause, while in charge of the American Legation in Panama, of bringing about the conditions which made possible his election to two four-year terms in the presidency, and he always showed me an honest and sincere gratitude. I only regret that he couldn't have been kept in that office for the rest of his life.

Late that afternoon Major Walsh called on me, stating that he had had a most severe "dressing down" from General Sturgis and had been ordered not to place any more airplanes at my disposal. That was serious.

Next morning I appeared again before the General. I showed him my letters from President Porras, but he was not mollified. He informed me that not only would he permit no further use of army airplanes for my purposes, but that he would have nothing whatever to do with my expedition. No army man would be allowed to accompany me, and no army equipment would be available to me.

When he finished with me, he went on to higher matters, attacking General Patrick, head of the Air Service at Washington. He had no right, he declared, to issue orders direct to Major Walsh, but must do it only through him, General Sturgis.

It was then that I woke up to what was really the matter. Apparently I had become a sort of test-case in the bureaucratic battle raging in the Army and Navy between the old-line officers and the newly developed and rapidly expanding Air Service. General Patrick, General Mitchell, and others were waging an uphill fight for an independent Air Service. The Generals and the Admirals wanted to keep the Air Service subordinate to their departments. General Patrick's audacity in giving orders to the Canal Zone Air Service direct, instead of through the official hierarchy, was enough to make General

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Sturgis tear his hair. He saw a chance to put the upstart air-men in their proper places. And I, the innocent bystander, was picked for the goat.

I had no desire to mix in this typical Army quarrel, but the success of my expedition was at stake. And I had a few aces up my sleeve. I cabled frantic appeals to the Departments of Commerce and War, and to General Goethals to bring pressure on General Sturgis. The pressure was brought all right. The General got his orders hot off the cable. But then I had a new demonstration of the power of Army red tape.

Two days later the General summoned me into his presence. He had his instructions. The War Department had ordered him to provide me with the men and equipment I desired and also to put airplanes at my disposal. But here was the catch. I don't know by whom the clause was inserted, but the General was left the judge of whether the proposed flights were "too dangerous." It was enough for General Sturgis, who knew his red tape, if nothing else.

Solemnly he made his pronouncement. The flight over interior Darien, he declared, was so extremely dangerous that he could not allow any plane to make the attempt. As for the army men who were to accompany me, they would be permitted to go at their own desire, but as this was a scientific and rubber hunting expedition and not direct military service, those army men would have to be put on furlough without pay and any accidents or death met by them could not be compensated for as if they were in active service. As for the equipment, if I would make out a detailed list of what I wanted, he would have the Quartermaster allot it to me, but again, as this was not for direct military purposes, I would have to deposit in advance with the Quartermaster in cash the full value of the equipment, and any losses or damage to this equipment would have to be paid for by me. Even the Signal

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Corps vessel, the *Coco Solo*, the only boat in Panama waters which was suitable for carrying our large party to Yavisa, would have to be leased and paid for by me—and at what I considered an exorbitant rate.

The loss of further airplane surveys was a great blow and handicap. The only practical modern way to explore considerable areas of jungle land away from navigable waters is to determine from the air the points to be aimed for and follow up by surface parties which know their objectives. Otherwise jungle exploration is too much like hunting for a needle in a very difficult haystack.

But I had not the time to conduct a lengthy struggle with the General over the airplanes. I knew only too well the resources of Army red tape in the hands of a determined officer. My large party was running up too much expense in the excellent hotels of the Canal Zone and was subject to too much unaccustomed temptation in the “wet” and otherwise diverting Republic of Panama across the boundary. Also it was January and the dry season was due to end in April. I wanted to reach my goal before the really serious rains set in.

At midnight on February 5th we finally put out from Panama City on the Signal Corps vessel *Coco Solo*. She was a very seaworthy boat, between sixty and seventy feet long, with a seven-foot draught and ample cabin room. There was a canvas covered upper deck large enough for the army cots of the white men. The negroes slept on the lower deck.

The sea was calm. By daybreak we reached the channel between the Pearl Islands and the mainland. Already we were well off the beaten track. The shipping lanes all lie to the west of the islands. Only a few small coastal vessels take the northeast route, and these pass at very long and irregular intervals.

The name “Panama” comes from an Indian word mean-

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ing "abounding in fish," and no more appropriate name could have been chosen for this section of the Pacific coast. The surface of the deep blue water swarmed with life, and the air was full of sea birds of many types, soaring up, diving, and plunging for their prey.

Breder, our ichthyologist or fish expert, stationed himself in the bow with proper professional attention. His chief reward was a strange fish about three feet long and shaped like an American pike. Numbers of these creatures would leap out of the water just ahead of the bow of our boat, and holding their bodies at a 60 degree angle, would slither along the surface supported by the lashing of their broad tails. Their open mouths and big eyes which seemed to look sideways and backwards gave them the appearance of deliberately laughing at the intruding vessel.

Breder said they were a species of "bally-hoo," not unknown in other waters, but generally smaller and never so abundant. We had no luck trying to catch them with lines and spinners. A shot-gun seemed more promising, but we had no time yet to start collecting specimens.

This section of coast from the mouth of the Rio Chepo to San Miguel Bay is almost, if not completely uninhabited—for reasons mentioned above, chiefly the swampy character of the coast and the wide belts of liquid mud which fringe the shore. By mid-afternoon we had reached the head of San Miguel Bay, the entrance to beautiful, landlocked Darien Harbor. We had passed to the south the mouth of the Rio Sambu, where Shea claimed to have shot the "man-beast." To the west stood Mt. Sapo, 6,000 feet high, the first peak in the "Andean Range" rising higher to the south.

The mouth of San Miguel Bay is sixteen miles across, but the passage from its head into Darien Harbor is only three miles wide and is blocked by a group of small islands with

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passages between them only a quarter of a mile wide. Beyond the islands Darien Harbor extends southeasterly for twenty miles, with a maximum width of four miles. Two of the passages between the islands are safe for large vessels, but only at high tide and slack water.

The Pacific Ocean at this point has a twenty-three foot tide, which gains tremendous force after crowding into the San Miguel Bay. When it is running full, the passages between the islands are whirling mill-races impassable for any vessel except small canoes literally scraping the shore.

In Darien Harbor itself the tide produces a "tidal bore" or wave several feet high like the wash from an enormous boat, which roars all the way up the Tuyra River to the mouth of the Chucunaque. It is similar to the well-known bore in the lower Orinoco. Indians in small canoes make for the shore and beach their craft when they see it coming.

We had intended to time our arrival so as to reach the entrance of Darien Harbor at high tide, but we got there about an hour too soon and had to wait among the mud banks of upper San Miguel Bay until slack water. Then quickly and safely we made the run through the "Boca Chica" channel into the harbor.

We anchored for the night in front of the negro village of La Palma, for we had something interesting to investigate.

CHAPTER IX

THE ISLAND OF THE MUSICAL ROCKS

*

LA PALMA ISLAND is the largest of the islands in the passage between Darien Harbor and San Miguel Bay. It is about a mile long and half as wide and is bounded by "Boca Chica" and "Boca Grande" (Little Mouth and Big Mouth), the two chief channels in the passage. The island rises in a smooth curve to an altitude of about fifty feet above sea level, and it is remarkable in being free from jungle. It is mostly covered with short grass, with a few coconut trees scattered along the shore and in the interior, which gives the effect of a large, well-kept park.

From the highest point in the center of the island rises an incongruous wireless tower with an American frame cottage and outhouses at its base. This is, or was, a secret wireless station of the United States Navy—a "secret" now well-known to all interested nations—which was erected during the war to guard against any attempt by Germany to make Darien Harbor a submarine base for attack upon the shipping of the Panama Canal. There was a similar station on the Caribbean coast at Puerto Obaldia on the boundary between Panama and Colombia to watch over the Gulf of Urabá.

Several of us took a small dingy and rowed across Boca Chica to the island. The American "garrison" consisted of two young wireless operators and a Naval doctor. They were not

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entirely isolated by any means. In fact there were a number of good-looking young Chola Indian girls attached to the station. But they were glad to see us. We were bringing them their mail, and white visitors are always welcome in such places.

We weren't merely paying a social call, but were following up a strange tale told us by army officers in the Canal Zone. The wireless men were eager to tell us all they knew—in fact, the story seemed to be the chief item of interest in their rather monotonous lives.

They said that every month, on one of the first four days following the full moon, a strange group of Indians would appear off the island. They were not coastal Cholas, and they seemed to come from the mouth of the Savanna five miles away across the Harbor. They never came near the wireless station, and they never permitted the local Cholas or negroes to approach them, but warned them away with unmistakably hostile demonstrations. They appeared just before sunset and gathered on the southern point of the island. Then, when the moon was at its highest point, a powerful "music" like the sound of a gigantic organ would come from the Boca Chica.

The wireless operators said they had heard this "music" often. It never occurred except on one of the four days following the full moon, and it always came on the night immediately after the arrival of the Indians. They had reported the phenomenon to the military authorities of the Canal Zone, and a number of army officers had come down to investigate. But the Indians never let them approach Boca Chica on those particular nights, and on other nights they could see or hear nothing to account for the sounds. The official explanation was that the sounds were caused by the high spring tides acting upon partially submerged caverns in the rocks.

This explanation does not account for the fact that the music was heard only on the night after the Indians arrived—

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which might be any of the four nights after the full moon. They must have been instrumental in producing it, or it would have occurred in more regular relation to tidal phenomena. My best guess, which is only a guess, is that the Indians remove large stones closing the mouths of submerged caves, and the rushing waters of the spring tide produce the sounds.

Unfortunately the moon was not full when we were at La Palma, so I could not make a personal investigation. But the story interested me greatly—particularly its ethnological aspect. The Indians who come to La Palma Island are not local Cholas, and there are no Indian settlements on the lower Savanna except a few Chola huts near the mouth. But I know that there are very interesting Indians in the interior valley of Darien near the headwaters of the river. These could come down the Savanna at the time of the spring tides in their small canoes.

I am more and more convinced, from other evidence which will appear later, that Darien in very ancient times was the seat of a highly developed culture which was destroyed long before the coming of the Spaniards. Certain remnants of it are still preserved among the Tule tribes. So perhaps this ceremony at the time of the full moon is a religious observance of ancient origin. La Palma Island is held in great respect by the local Cholas and is called "The Island of the Musical Rocks."

We could not wait until the full moon to make further investigations, so we returned to the *Coco Solo*, which was anchored off the village of La Palma.

Early the next morning we started up Darien Harbor. We passed the wide mouth of the Savanna to the north. The "Marsh Range" on the other side of which was the interior valley, could be plainly seen. A brackish swamp fifteen miles inland, about level with the sea at high tide and high but

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not dry at low tide, extended clear to the foothills of the distant range. It was one of the largest and most impassable swamps I have ever seen, thirty-five miles long and averaging ten miles wide.

Twelve miles up Darien Harbor, on the west side, is a second negroid village, Chepigana, now largely deserted, which is dominated by a large dilapidated Catholic church occasionally visited by a priest from Panama City. Near the mouth of the Tuyra River, we passed the large, flat, densely wooded island of Resaca, once the field of a bloody battle between English buccaneers and the Spaniards guarding the approach to the gold fields of Cana. To the south we could see the mouths of the Marea and Tucuti rivers whose headwaters rise in the unknown southwestern district of Darien.

We were now entering the Tuyra River proper. The stream at this point is about two miles wide, with a swift alternating tide. It is a novel experience to speed *upstream* on an "up" current, and we had timed our departure from La Palma to follow the ascending tidal bore. A mile-wide swamp now bordered the southern bank, while the northerly swamp narrowed as we approached the "Marsh Range." The gap through which our airplanes had flown was plainly visible.

The lower stretch of the Tuyra is infested by the largest crocodiles I have ever seen. All the white members of our party will testify that the largest seemed at least thirty feet long—though my friend Dr. W. W. Mann, Director of the National Zoo at Washington, D. C., says that this is "highly improbable." (The Panaman members of our crew will swear they were fifty to sixty feet long!) Anyway they looked it. We amused ourselves by practicing with our rifles on these long targets, which suddenly changed from what looked like huge logs half buried in the mud banks to agile monsters racing to deep water. I don't think we did them much damage. This

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would be a great place for a crocodile-skin collector, if he could devise some way of salvaging his victims out of the mud.

At five P.M. we reached the junction of the Chucunaque and Upper Tuyra, which combine to form the Lower Tuyra. Here we planned to stay for the night, and the captain dropped two anchors to steady the boat against the recurrent tidal bore and its swift following cross-currents.

The gold fields of Cana lie due south from here, on the Upper Tuyra thirty miles by air line, perhaps one hundred miles by water. Yavisa and the Chucunaque valley lie due north. A number of small dilapidated negro villages line the course up the Upper Tuyra to Cana. Yavisa, fourteen miles above the mouth of the Chucunaque, is the last negro settlement on the route to the interior valley.

Some of our party took a small boat and rowed one mile up the Upper Tuyra to the village of Real (full name "Real de Santa Maria"), and soon returned, accompanied, to my amazement, by four Americans. They turned out to be employees of the Sinclair Oil Company, which had just secured an exclusive option from the Panama government to explore for oil "ten miles back from the Pacific coast of Darien." With great liberality and generosity (to itself) the company had chosen to interpret the term "coast" to mean the limit of high tide. As the high spring tides can be felt perhaps twenty miles above Yavisa on the Chucunaque and twenty miles above Real, it claimed oil-right jurisdiction over much of interior Darien.

The oilmen were pleasant and agreeable fellows, very secretive, of course, about the results of their explorations. They had been in the neighborhood for about two months. They had ascended part way up the Chucunaque to be turned back by menacing Indians. They had attempted to ascend the Savanna River to be turned back by the "mud-glacier." And now had about completed their exploration of the Upper Tuyra. What-

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ever the real intentions of the Sinclair Oil Company may have been, I was convinced its men had spent more time looking for gold than for oil.

I later was informed they had found no indications of oil in interior Darien, but had found hopeful signs at Garachine Point near San Miguel Bay on the Pacific. I also learned that the leading oil explorer went to London to interest British capital in a gold development project on the Upper Tuyra.

They reported seeing numerous white Indians—"white as any white man," some on the lower Chucunaque and some on the Rio Paca, a tributary of the Upper Tuyra. The oil men were all suffering from malaria, which was only to be expected since they made their headquarters in the negro village of Real. They were planning to leave in the next day or two for Panama City.

They had a small thirty-five foot gasoline cruiser, drawing three feet of water. So I made a deal with them, offering to send them back to Panama City on the *Coco Solo* if they would lease their small cruiser to us. This they accepted willingly. Their boat was rather small for that coastal trip in case of a storm, while the captain of the *Coco Solo* was only too pleased, as he was afraid to take his big boat, drawing seven feet, up the narrowing Chucunaque to Yavisa. So we decided to unload our cargo from the *Coco Solo* at Real, and send it on in several trips by the small cruiser to Yavisa, permitting the *Coco Solo* to return to Panama City with its new passengers. At Real we also hired several immense dugout canoes from the recently established Chinese trader there.

While the cargo was being transferred to the cruiser and the dugouts I sent Lieut. Townsend and Lieut. Rosebaum up the Chucunaque in a small canoe with negro paddlers to pick a suitable camping site not too near Yavisa. I remembered an attractive coconut grove on the opposite bank, about a quarter

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of a mile down stream from the village and directed the lieutenants to investigate it. They returned later in the day to report that the grove was an ideal site for a camp. Benton and the other men completed the transfer of our cargo to the smaller boat. Next morning the *Coco Solo* departed for Panama City with the Sinclair explorers, while we proceeded up the Chucunaque with the *Marguerite* and its following convoy of dugout canoes.

The coconut grove on the opposite bank below Yavisa proved a perfect camping site. The bank here rose at a steep slope of about forty-five degrees to a secondary bench thirty feet above the river level. This bench was practically flat, extending back about two hundred yards to the base of the low foothills near the gap in the "Marsh Range" through which the lower Chucunaque emerges from the central valley. The level stretch paralleled the river for nearly a quarter of a mile.

Most of this area was covered by a healthy grove of bearing coconut palms, apparently about ten years old, planted by no one knows whom. The coconut palm, of course, distributes itself naturally only along the sea coasts, where the floating coconuts are washed ashore by the wind, tides, and currents, but when propagated by man the tree grows and bears far in the interior. I have seen healthy, bearing coconut trees two thousand miles up the Amazon and far in the interior of Luzon in the Philippines, disproving the common belief that the coconut thrives only along the seashore. But in these interior places the original distribution was by man.

There is a rumor that at the beginning of the Great War, in 1914, the German Government established a secret wireless station on the Caribbean shore near the boundary between the Republic of Panama and Colombia, intending to use the Gulf of Urabá as a base for submarine attacks against the shipping of the Panama Canal. Neither Panama, Colombia nor the

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United States had yet taken sides in the War, all three being technically neutral. Such a wireless base was a clear encroachment of sovereignty on the part of Germany and a technical breach of neutrality on the part of the nation claiming sovereignty over the locality.

Great Britain solved this problem with its usual direct practicality. A war vessel appeared off the site of the wireless station, and the sailors were given "shore leave" on that jungle bound coast. When the "shore leave" was over, there was no more wireless station, and there were no more Germans. Months later a bedraggled and exhausted German officer turned up in Panama City, having crossed somehow from the Caribbean to the Pacific and worked his way up the coast to Panama City, only to die raving with fever shortly afterwards. The negroes of Yavisa say that another German appeared in their village well supplied with money, cleared and planted that level bench to coconuts, built a comfortable shack, and then "disappeared" a few years later. Whatever may be the virtues of this story we were grateful to that hypothetical German for the coconut grove.

CHAPTER X

THE CHOCOI INDIANS

*

LIEUTENANT TOWNSEND took charge of establishing our main base and laid out our camp so efficiently that we named it "Camp Townsend." For some strange and thankful reason, none of the Yavisa negroes appeared on the scene, though their village was just around the bend, up stream on the opposite bank. But we were delighted with the arrival of a large group of fine looking, clean, muscular, light copper-colored Indian men, who watched our unloading operations with friendly interest, and then volunteered to help unload the boxes, equipment and supplies from the *Marguerite* and her convoy of canoes.

I had gone up on the ledge to discuss the arrangement of the tents with Lt. Townsend when a series of loud shouts drew my attention to the river bank. Professor Fairchild, inarticulate with amazement, was waving to us from the crest of the slope. Every one at the camp, white men and negro laborers had congregated on the bank.

Among our numerous pieces of cargo was one which had been anathema to everybody who had touched it from New York to Darien. It was a huge traveling-salesman type of trunk, particularly strong and heavy, in which were many of the articles intended as gifts for the Indians—machetes, axes, hunting knives, beads, mirrors, etc. That trunk weighed 370 pounds,

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a figure I could not forget because of the numerous excess baggage charges I had paid on it. In New York it required four baggage men, liberal tips, and vehement cursing to get it moved. And the same process, only with more men, was repeated each time it was handled in Panama.

Benton, supervising the unloading of the *Marguerite*, was preparing a skid of heavy planks to get the trunk ashore and was planning another plank skid on which to push and pull it up the steep bank. Three of our Indian visitors, watching the proceeding, went down to the *Marguerite* and motioned Benton's crew of negroes aside.

One particularly powerful Indian bent over in the shallow water alongside the boat, while the other two, on deck, easily lifted the trunk and placed it on his arched shoulders and neck. Then with a hand forward and aft to steady his burden and grinning from ear to ear, he dug in his wide spreading toes and walked straight up the steep slope. Arriving at the crest of the slope, Townsend directed him to the site of my headquarter's tent. There the Indian easily and gently let the trunk down on the ground, and stood erect, still smiling.

I have seen remarkable feats of physical strength and endurance among the northern Chinese and Mongols, even among some mountain tribes in the Philippines, and among the Quichua and Aymará Indians of the Andes in Peru and Bolivia, but for spring-steel muscles and inexhaustible endurance, pound for pound, I have never seen the equal of those Darien Chocoi Indians. And yet they are not big men—in fact, in stature they are rather small, seldom over 5 feet, 4 inches in height, with symmetrical well-shaped bodies, full deep chests, powerful shoulders and finely muscled legs. It is not the size of their muscles so much as the quality, which gives them their great physical powers. I later saw them pole their dugout canoes up swift mountain streams, from daybreak

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to midnight with never a sign of weariness, while our most powerful negroes became so exhausted after one hour of the same work that they literally fell overboard from sheer exhaustion.

Our entire party stopped work to watch and follow that Indian. I opened the trunk on the spot and took out a beautiful little six inch marble hunting knife in a pretty leather scabbard, to present to the Indian strong-man. He looked at it with appreciative amazement, looked at me, and when I motioned to him to fasten it to the waistcord of his loin cloth, he and his companions let out a joyous boyish shout, and all rushed back to help unload the remaining cargo.

The unloading job was well accounted for from then on. Benton brought his negro crew up to Townsend to pitch the tents, set up the army field kitchen, prepare a latrine, etc. In a remarkably short time, the essential job was done, and the cook and his assistants were preparing our first camp meal. Then I opened the big trunk again and presented each Indian with a new shiny *machete* or long jungle knife—a valued possession to them. One of the Indians spoke some Spanish. Later a half-breed negro-Indian interpreter joined our party, and we had no difficulty communicating with the Indians from then on.

It was an auspicious start. My whole plan of action was based entirely on winning the friendship of the Indians by kindness, generosity, fair treatment and absolute justice. My experience had taught me that the full-blooded Indian will tolerate a half-breed when he has to, because the half-breed has an Indian mother, but avoids the negro whenever possible. So through the interpreter I told the Indians that they were always our friends and were always welcome to visit our camp as our guests, but that no negroes were welcome except those we brought with us or should hire as laborers. Rather hard

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on the negro, perhaps, but necessary in an Indian country, and besides I am not responsible for Nature's differentiation between the Negro and the Indian.

By nightfall, Camp Townsend was established with fine military style and efficiency. As I planned to spend several weeks there, every effort was made to make it comfortable. I had brought a good deal of dressed lumber on our boat, from which Townsend constructed a fine dining table, with benches for the mess tent, benches for the scientists' laboratory tent, tables for my headquarter's tent, etc. Each white man had a folding canvas steamer chair. Each living tent, housing two white men on folding army cots, had an extra fly in front as a porch. The entire camp faced the river, close enough to the bank to observe all passing canoes. The kitchen tent was joined to the mess tent by an open tent fly. The negro laborers had two large wall tents for their living quarters.

Pinzon, the cook, and his assistant got a big dinner prepared on the military field stove, and we all prepared to celebrate our establishment in our new home. That evening many more fine looking, friendly Chocoi Indians visited our camp, and one, a particularly handsome, dignified and self-possessed man of about forty, who spoke considerable Spanish, was announced as the Chocoi's head chief. Asked his name, he replied, "My Spanish name is Chief Avellino." Asked for his Indian name he only smiled. It was my first experience with a strange custom of the Chocoi. A few of the leading Indians, who have had contact with Spanish speaking people of the coast, have adopted Spanish names which they readily divulge. But all have Indian names also, which they never tell to strangers. Never in the six weeks, during which we established very friendly relations with the Chocoi and were even permitted to observe many of their tribal customs and learn some of their secrets, did we ever learn the Chocoi name of a single

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individual. They apparently have a belief that to tell their real names in some way places them in the power of others.

I invited Chief Avellino to take a seat next to me at our table and treated him as an honored guest, even to the extent of a little appetizer of brandy which he appreciated with the rest of us. While he was a bit awkward with his knife and fork, he maintained his dignity and composure to the evident appreciation of the numerous Indian spectators.

I told the chief I hoped on the next day his people would bring their wives and children to visit us, as I had many presents to give them. His hesitation was apparent. I then told him that every man in my party, white and black, understood that he was in no way to mistreat any Indian woman or child; if any man of my party did so, I would shoot him; and if he, the chief, overheard that one of my party had offended or abused an Indian woman or girl and notified me, I would shoot the man on the spot. This actually was the understanding I had reached with every man of my party before leaving Panama. I knew such practices, customary among "civilized" white men in contact with primitive people, invariably antagonize the Indian men, and my only hope for success was to win the confidence of the Indians. Avellino replied that he would bring his own wives and children to visit us the next day. The other Indians could do as they wished.

The first thing next morning, while Townsend and the rest were getting settled in camp, I took Charlton and Benton and two negro paddlers and went by canoe to Yavisa. My first thought, of course, was to visit the white Indian house which I had seen six months before. I inquired among the slovenly negroes for the old head-man and was told he was dead. The other negroes were plainly antagonistic. I asked if the white Indians were still in their house, and was told they were gone. Leaving the others in the village, I went up the same trail

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along the river, now already partly overgrown with jungle, and found the house of the three little white Indian girls abandoned and already partly dismantled. Returning to the village, I again tried to learn of their whereabouts, but could get no intelligible answer. They were gone. That was all.

While disappointed, I had expected as much. So I decided to settle down to a carefully thought-out plan of action. It would be hopeless to try to find the white Indians if they did not want to be found. If an Indian wants to hide in the jungle, he can always do so with little difficulty. My only hope was to make friends with successive groups of Indians and let the news spread gradually that my expedition was friendly and well disposed. The first step would be to cultivate the Chocois, who were already friendly and accessible. In the meantime my companions could go ahead with the other object of the expedition—a thorough scientific investigation of this portion of Darien.

My scientists were well pleased. True scientists are trained to “make haste slowly.” They were content to “dig in” at Camp Townsend and get to work.

Major Malsbury also had his work cut out for him. His first job was to establish our precise latitude and longitude, a more difficult job near the equator than in higher latitudes. Our military “portable” wireless outfit was soon set up with its sixty foot telescopic tower and at noon demonstrated its ability to receive the time signals from the U. S. Government wireless station in the Canal Zone. But all attempts to “talk” with La Palma, Port Obaldia or the Zone were failures. We soon learned that our set would receive, but would not send, and later I learned it had already been condemned for service before being allotted to us—covered by a deposit at full value.

But the other army men as well as Benton, and Charlton, craved action. So leaving the scientists to “dig in” for their

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detailed investigations, aided by Major Johnson, the naturalist, I organized the army men, with Benton, Charlton and myself into a "Flying Squadron" for quick, short exploration trips. Before attempting the "Great Push" up the Chucunaque, the difficulties of which I alone appreciated, I intended to learn as much as possible about southern Darien, toward the Colombian border, as well as to toughen and acclimate my party for the work I knew was to come.

The Elto outboard motors were tuned up. Small fast dug-out canoes were finally secured after much persuasion from the negroes of Yavisa and Real through the intercession of the Chinese trader, who had accommodately moved up to Yavisa from Real and established himself as the leading citizen of that community.

Avellino, the Chocoi chief, returned in the afternoon with his entire family, consisting of two wives and numerous children, boys and girls from about eighteen years old down. The elder wife, a slender, good-looking, dignified woman of about thirty-five, showed an intelligent interest in our party. The younger wife was a buxom young girl of perhaps eighteen, attractive physically but rather stolid mentally and decidedly subservient to wife number one. While polygamy is practiced and frequent among the Chocoi Indians, the first wife always holds an honored position and is the domestic head of the household. In fact, the polygamy of the Chocois is much like the Chinese system of one wife and as many concubines as the man of the house can provide for. In all our six weeks among the Chocoi, we never saw any indication of strife or discord among the feminine portions of the household.

The Chocoi men wear a "gee-string" or loin cloth, sometimes of cheap traders' cotton and sometimes of a native-made bark cloth, while the chiefs and leading men generally have hand-beaten silver wrist bands, occasional large silver earrings,



White Indian Girl, San Blas Coast



*White Indian Child Mendelian Recessive.
Each Parent Had a White Indian Parent*

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and as many beads of gay colors as they can drape across their chests and around their thighs.

The women wear larger loin cloths of the same material wrapped around the waist extending nearly to the knees; and as many necklaces of beads, shells, and silver ornaments as they possess. Amongst hundreds of Chocoi, men and women, I saw only one set of gold earrings, whereas the Tule women, as we learned later, invariably wear large gold earrings and nose rings, never silver, though they do wear silver necklaces. In fact, the Chocoi may be called a silver people almost exclusively, while the Tule adhere to the gold standard for most ornamental purposes.

Both men and women of the Chocoi wear the hair long, falling down over the shoulders, though some of the younger women trim the hair to "bangs" in front. Avellino and some of the leading men on festive occasions wore a girdle or circlet of braided yellow flowers on their heads.

Children arrive amongst the Chocoi as rapidly as the laws of nature allow, but the high rate of mortality among them, as among the Tule people, holds down the population. There is no birth control in Darien, as there is among certain Indian tribes in the northerly Amazon headwaters.

I placed a large extra tent at the disposal of Avellino and his family and prepared to cultivate his friendship. A five foot strip of beautiful cloth of gold was presented to wife number one for a new gown, and another of bright crimson cotton to wife number two. All the others were presented with ten-cent store bracelets, necklaces, mirrors and scissors. The children got toys, harmonicas, etc. To Avellino I gave a single-barreled breech-loading shot gun, and a set of brass shells with powder, shot, caps, and a reloading tool which he readily mastered. Avellino's party stayed three days. After the first day, continual delegations of Chocoi men with their wives and

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children appeared every day, many staying overnight. All received some pleasing trinkets. At night they were entertained with the portable victrolas and a modest display of fireworks. The Indians must have thought that "Santa Claus" had come, and they found no "catch" or trick as yet.

The final conquest of Avellino was with dynamite. The Chocoi are great fishermen. I told Avellino I could show him a new and better way to fish and tossed a weighted stick of dynamite, with lighted fuse, into a deep hole at the mouth of a small creek near by. Nearly half a small canoe-load of fish, mostly of a sturgeon type, came to the surface, stunned or dead, and were promptly gathered in. That impressed the Chief more than all the rest of our white man's magic. Avellino must have some dynamite. I explained to him carefully how to use it, warned him of its danger, and gave him three sticks with caps and fuse attached. He disappeared with numerous of his followers up a tributary near by and later returned with his canoe-bottom strewn with sturgeon, cat-fish, and a small sword-fish which had evidently worked up into fresh water from the coast. It was a great triumph for him, and I knew he was at last our sincere and loyal friend.

Then, and not till then, I told him I had come to find the white Indians I had seen six months before. Avellino's face fell. He said I must not go up the Chucunaque. Even the Chocoi could not ascend the Chucunaque above a tributary known as the Membrillo, which was about two days' canoe trip above Yavisa. Beyond that point were numerous Tule Indians who would kill all intruders.

Avellino also said that the second night after we had made camp at Camp Townsend, a party of white Indians had passed in front of us in a canoe and had now gone up to the headwaters of the Rio Chico, his own river and territory. He could give me Chocoi Indians to ascend the Rio Chico if I

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wanted to visit his house. But he could not help me go up the Chucunaque.

I told Avellino I would go up to his house the next day and then push on up to the headwaters to find the white Indians. Immediately he called his family and followers together and told them to get ready to return to his home at once and prepare for our arrival next day. He left several Chocoi men to guide and help us reach his place.

CHAPTER XI
AVELLINO'S HOUSE

*

WE started early the next morning as we understood it to be a seven hours' trip. The Indian tells time by pointing to the sky and tracing with his arm the arc which the sun describes in the specified time. A six hours' trip, starting at daybreak, is indicated by sweeping the arm from a horizontal position pointing to the east, to the zenith directly above. A twelve hour period is indicated by an 180° sweep from east to west. Nine o'clock in the morning is indicated by pointing to the east, arm elevated 45° , etc. In this way the Indian indicates accurately both time and duration of time.

Besides the "Flying Squadron" consisting of Lieutenants Townsend and Rosebaum, Benton, Charlton and myself, I took the three scientists, Baer, Breder and Brin, Major Johnson, the naturalist, and two American negroes, Arthur and "Dirty Dick," whom I had hired at Panama. Benton and I occupied a large canoe, carrying considerable camping equipment and supplies, manned by the two negroes, while the rest of the party occupied smaller canoes manned by the Indians, who led the way. A word here about Arthur and "Dirty Dick" is appropriate. These two negroes, who originally hailed from Mobile, Alabama, were huge coal-black men over six feet tall and powerfully muscled. They had come to Panama several years before, spoke considerable Spanish, and claimed to have for-

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merly gathered rubber in the lower Chucunaque Valley. I hired them in Panama at rather high wages on their general appearance and representations. They claimed to be expert "palanque" men, expert at poling canoes through swift water where paddles are of little use. I was soon to find out they were neither "palanque" men nor any other kind of canoe men, and had never been in Darien before. But otherwise they were comparatively loyal and powerful bilingual negroes. They were an interesting pair, very devoted to each other, very formal and dignified, and held themselves, in some respects rightly, as far superior to the Panamanian negroes. In a way they were like the famous "Amos and Andy," Arthur being the level headed, quiet, more capable member of the pair, while "Richard," as he called himself, was the talkative, emotional and pompous one. As my own given name happened to be Richard, or Dick for short, the party decided to dub Richard the negro, "Dirty Dick" to distinguish between us, which I was supposed to interpret as a compliment.

Anyway, Benton and I in our big canoe with Arthur and "Dirty Dick" brought up the rear of the party, and we remained in the rear. We headed up the Chucunaque to Yavisa, and there entered the mouth of the Rio Chico, a main tributary which entered from the east with headwaters high in the San Blas Mountain Range.

As soon as we entered the Rio Chico, we began to encounter swift rapids, alternating with deep quiet water. The Indian-manned canoes ahead soon passed out of sight beyond the numerous bends, the Indians handling their canoes with smooth, graceful rhythm, while our powerful negroes labored without skill or efficiency. It was immediately apparent that my high-priced imported "palanque men" were the crudest amateurs at that game, and I did not spare them for their deception. The alternating stretches of still, deep water per-

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mitted the intermittent use of our outboard motor which the rocks in the swifter stretches rendered useless, and gave the negroes some respite. But before we had been on our way about an hour, both Arthur and Dirty Dick were so completely exhausted that several times they actually fell overboard. There was no particular danger, as the swift stretches were seldom over waist deep, while the deep water was quiet. But so slow was our progress that eventually Benton and I had to go overboard in the swift water and help the exhausted negroes pull and push our heavily laden dugout to the quieter stretches above.

It was nightfall before we reached Avellino's house, a distance by airline from Yavisa of only about seven miles, and perhaps twice that amount by the river's course. The rest of the party, with their expert Indian canoe men, had arrived in complete comfort hours ahead of us. Benton and I got there with tempers and bodies both about exhausted, while our negroes were in a complete state of mental and physical collapse.

Avellino's house was an ideal tropical habitation. From a white man's point of view, the Chocoi houses are the most sensible for the tropics which I have ever seen. They are built on posts with floors elevated six to ten feet above the ground. They have open sides with long overhanging eaves and high thatched roofs. Many Chocoi houses are round in plan. Avellino's was rectangular, about eighty by fifty feet and situated in a clearing on a small knoll thirty feet above and one hundred feet back from the water. The jungle had been cleared back for a space of about fifty yards and planted to bananas and plantains. A nice gravelly beach in front gave a good berth for the canoes and a good place for a bath. All the Darien Indians are amphibious, spending much of their time in the water, and next to the Japanese they are the most cleanly people, in their bodies and homes, that I know of.

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The main or living floor of the house was reached by a notched log with two guard rails. These Chocoi houses show real architectural skill. They are constructed somewhat on the principle of a modern sky-scraper. The framework is first erected of strong heavy poles of a native species of *lignum vitæ*, an everlasting wood even in the tropics, enormously strong and proof against termites or "white ants." Much ingenuity is displayed in the design of the high roof trusses. The ends of the poles are recessed at the joints and bound firmly in place by strands of the native "bejuca" vines which are as strong and supple as hemp ropes.

The main floor juts out several feet beyond the supporting columns, forming an overhanging balcony around the entire house, and preventing access to the interior to any one climbing up the foundation columns. The overhanging eaves extend beyond and protect the projecting balcony. In interior Darien there are seldom strong winds, and the rain generally falls straight down.

The roofs are thatched with palm leaves or long heavy grasses, and require replacement every couple of years, but the rest of the house is long-lived. The main or living floor is of black palm slabs, three inches wide and an inch thick, with narrow open spaces between, which permit dust and débris to fall through to the ground below and be readily swept away with brush brooms. The floor is covered with mats or rugs plaited from grasses or long palm slivers, which are readily rolled up for house-cleaning.

In one corner of the floor space is the kitchen, consisting of a hearth formed by a square of logs six or eight inches in diameter, and six or eight feet long, enclosing a foundation of hard packed clay six inches thick. On this hearth the family fire is kept burning practically continuously.

An Indian fireplace is a scientific achievement. Four or

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five short logs of about uniform diameter are placed on the clay hearth with ends radiating from a central joint like spokes from the hub of a wheel. The fire is built at the hub, only the ends of the logs burning. When the log spokes are drawn in close, the effect is like an old-fashioned blacksmith's forge, and a hot blazing flame is produced. When not being used for cooking, the logs are pulled back a foot or so from the center, and the fire is banked with ashes. In this condition it will "hold" all night. The first thing in the morning the Indian housewife pushes the logs closer together, rakes away the banking ashes, and fans the coals with a palm fan. A flame springs up promptly. Such a fire can be regulated to give a hot roaring fire or a more moderate baking heat. As the logs are consumed from the inner ends, new logs are shoved in place. There is no cutting of sized firewood, no unruly fire continually needing replacement and varying from too hot to not hot enough, but a steady heat which can be controlled as desired.

The Chocoi still use crude, hand-made clay pots and bowls for cooking purposes, though iron pots and kettles secured from coastal traders are highly prized. All eating or serving dishes are of carved wood, or of gourds or calabashes. Wooden or gourd spoons are used, but no knives or forks. The invariable stone "*metate*" or shallow concave stone for grinding corn and the accessory roller stone or "*mano*," which are used by all maize producing Indians, are in every house, varying in design and workmanship and often dating back to a considerable antiquity.

The staple foods of the Chocoi are maize, plantains or coarse "cooking bananas," and a dry-land rice, together with vegetables such as yucca, sweet potatoes, taro, tomatoes, peppers, and breadfruit. Their fruits comprise oranges, bananas, alligator pears, pineapples and numerous others. Cacao is secured from the indigenous tree, and sugar cane is abundant.

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For meat the Chocoi depend principally upon fish, crawfish, iguana, and occasional game. They have their native intoxicant drinks ranging from pure fermented maize "chicha" to various concoctions of fermented sugar cane.

Our party of whites was assigned a section of the main floor for quarters. Our negro laborers were compelled to remain in the canoes on the river bank and were not allowed to approach the house or mingle with the Indians.

With the evening meal over, and our mosquito bars suspended from the rafters over our sleeping quarters, the curiosity of our hosts demanded entertainment. Darkness had come suddenly. So we started our program with a military sky-rocket. Then the portable victrola was produced. After my experiences in Darien I would never think of going into a "wild" Indian territory without a phonograph. Time and again we were to encounter surly, unfriendly and even menacing Indians. We would appear to ignore them entirely. We would bring out and start a record while proceeding with our regular task of camp pitching or what-not. The attention of the Indians would soon be diverted from us to the "music-box." Their hostility would cease and be replaced by curiosity. Gradually they would draw closer to the instrument, discussing it among themselves and finally would end up by crowding around it as closely as possible, touching and feeling it. From then on they would often keep us playing it until midnight, and were no longer our enemies though perhaps not yet our friends. That victrola, our fireworks, outboard motors and dynamite were four essentials without which we could never have traversed interior Darien.

Avellino, with the superior mentality and sophistication of the natural leader, readily comprehended that the phonograph was only a clever mechanical device, but his more superstitious followers preferred to attribute mysterious qualities to

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it. Smilingly and confidentially Avellino would tell us that the other Indians were saying that there was some little "magic animal" in the box which produced the marvelous music and human voices. We had a great assortment of records, in English, Spanish and Italian, ranging from Grand Opera to the latest jazz. It interested us to observe, both among the Chocoi and later among the Tule, that the Indians' preference was for Grand Opera and Sousa marches, while the jazz rather mystified them.

After an hour or more of such entertainment I indicated to Avellino that we were ready for sleep. At his quiet command each Indian produced from under the overhanging eaves a rolled up bundle containing a thick bark-mat and a strip of hand woven cotton cloth a little longer than the individual and about three feet wide. The mats were laid out like rugs around the outer edge of the house. The Indians lay down on them, covered their entire bodies including their heads with the cotton sheets, and apparently went promptly to sleep.

We whites spread our army blankets in similar fashion, made pillows of our outer clothing, pulled our sheets over us, let down the mosquito bars, and thought we would soon be asleep too. But in spite of our good intentions, we were not Indians. Their tough wiry muscles can stand those hard corrugated floor slats with the meager protection of the bark mats, but not we tender whites. We had left our army cots in the canoes on the river bank, thinking we could emulate the Indians.

My companions stuck it out for a while, squirming and cursing. Then finally they gave it up, folded their bedding and mosquito bars, and went down to the river bank to sleep in the canoes. Only Breder and I stuck it out. But not to sleep. We were wide awake now. So we sat on the floor in the middle of the big house, with our backs propped against a central

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upright post, produced a shaded electric laboratory lamp and started writing up our diaries. It was one of those beautiful tropical nights which always cause me to wonder why man can waste them in sleep. The moon was shining. All around us we heard the night jungle sounds; the twittering and squawking of birds, the distant roar of howler monkeys, the whistling notes of cicadas and the occasional loud flop of a crocodile's tail in the river. Our shaded lamp cast a bright light on our diaries, surrounded by dark shadows throughout the house. The Indians were very quiet. We were soon engrossed in our writing.

And then on looking up, I received a shock. From all around the house, small white ghost-like shapes were converging slowly and silently toward the two of us—little bundles of white that crept forward imperceptibly. A distinct chill ran down my back. And then stifled chuckles from the Indians broke the tension. I seized an electric flashlight and "shot" one of the white shapes. With a shriek of laughter a child leaped up and scurried back to the outer circle of the grown Indians.

It was an Indian child's game. Again the creeping forms came toward us. Breder and I would wait, pretending not to see them, until the converging circle almost reached us. Then we would flash our lights in their faces, and drive them back to their protecting parents, when a renewed courage would bring them out to the attack again. Occasionally an insuppressible explosion of mirth would come from some adult in the distant circle.

This game of attack and retreat continued for half an hour, until at last all of us declared an armistice and went to sleep.

That first night in the big house of Avellino will always be one of my pleasantest memories.

CHAPTER XII

CHIEF MATA

*

WE were all up at dawn the next morning. Avellino had reported that the white Indians were at the head of his river, the Rio Chico, and we hoped we might find them there. Leaving our scientists behind, Townsend, Charlton, Benton and myself took two small dugout canoes from Avellino's collection, each manned by two splendid young Indians, and started up-stream eastward to the distant San Blas mountain range. Our canoemen were skilled and tireless. They used long bamboo poles instead of paddles in these shallow waters. We gained elevation on an average of at least a 1 per cent grade. The river still alternated between quiet stretches several hundred yards long and short swift rapids. For several miles we passed Chocoi houses and plantations usually about a quarter of a mile apart. In spite of our up-stream course we made good progress. By early afternoon we had passed the limit of the Chocoi houses and came to a tributary entering from the south, almost as large as the main stream, but uncharted on our Military Intelligence Map or any Panamanian or early Spanish map we had ever seen. We later named this tributary the Rio Tigre from Indian reports of the numerous jaguars frequenting its banks.

Soon we began to approach the foot-hills of the San Blas range. Our aneroid barometer, never very dependable under

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such conditions, showed we had risen perhaps 350 feet. The rapids ran no longer over smooth worn cobble-stones, but over sharp rock outcrops. Between them were deep pools of cool clear water with sheer rock walls.

At one of them we stopped for lunch. Deep down in the water we could see a school of fish about the size of large black bass. Our leading canoeman, noting our interest in the fish, dived overboard. We watched his light bronze body fifteen feet below us in the clear water. He swam along the rock ledge among some sunken logs. Presently he shot to the surface, and in his mouth was a wriggling fish held firmly by the head between his teeth.

The other three Indians saw that we were impressed by this novel exhibition, so they too dived into the pool, each to return with a fish in his mouth. In a very minutes they had a dozen—all we could eat at one meal. This is the only kind of fishing I know of where the angler does the biting.

Breder later identified the species as something or other with two long Latin names, which in English might be described as something between a sturgeon and a catfish. It frequents rocky waters, and when disturbed hides in the crevices of rocks.

After lunch we went on up-stream into beautiful broken country. But the rapids were so numerous and so close together that our progress became very slow. At last on a wet sand-bank we found two sets of human foot-prints. Both had the broad spreading toes and narrow heels of the typical Indian, but one was much larger than the other.

Our Chocois pointed excitedly at the tracks and cried "white Indian." We pushed on, hoping that they would allow us to find them. A few miles further on we came on a small temporary shelter, such as an Indian can erect in half an hour.

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It was a platform of poles about six by eight with a roof of large banana-like leaves. Among the rocks on the bank were the charred remains of a recent fire. Evidently the white Indians had passed the previous night there.

We had shot a big "Pato Real" or black "Spanish" duck some time earlier in the afternoon, and the sound of the shot might have carried as far as the hut. But from the beginning I realized we would not find the white Indians anywhere in that country if they did not care to be found, and so I had deliberately avoided any attempt to approach silently. They must have ascended the river by canoe, but there were a thousand places where they could have hidden their canoe in the dense jungle.

It was late afternoon, so we decided to camp for the night at the Indians' temporary stopping place. The hut itself was too small and frail for our large party. So we chose an elevated rock and gravel bar well out in the river channel and well away from the thick vegetation. Here Lieutenant Townsend, the orthodox militarist, wanted to pitch a formal camp with tent flies erected over our army cots, which would have necessitated considerable work cutting poles and guy pegs on the banks and bringing them out on the bar. I preferred to sleep in dry weather on an army cot under the open sky with the unobstructed moon and stars above. Charlton and Benton being mere laymen like myself, helped me overrule Townsend. The Indians, of course, were content to sleep on the sand. It was the middle of the dry season, when rains are infrequent and mosquitoes almost non-existent.

Next morning after an early breakfast, I decided to take Benton and two of the Chocois and proceed up-stream on foot. The river had become entirely too small and too swift for canoes. I left Townsend and Charlton and the two remaining Indians to guard the camp, prepare a noon meal and have

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everything ready for the return trip down-stream early in the afternoon.

We ascended five or six miles, getting well up into the western foothills of the San Blas range. The jungle-lined banks were so dense we were compelled to stick to the river bed, fording it many times. These higher valleys in Darien are paradises in the dry season, with clear fresh air, cool sparkling water, indescribably beautiful vegetation and teeming bird and animal life. Several times we came upon the same fresh tracks which we had seen the evening before. But tracks were all we found. Apparently the white Indians did not want to be seen.

At 10 A.M. we turned back and reached camp by 1 P.M. We had lunch and then launched our canoes for the down-stream coast. And *coast* it was!

Our long, narrow log canoes went down those rapids and over the wet rocks like toboggans down a slide. The alert Indians guided them skillfully among the rocks, with no danger of even a ducking in the shallow water. Coasting down-stream on a rapid tropical river is one of the pleasantest travel methods in the world.

In the midst of our rapid descent we stopped to take a closer look at a curious feature of the landscape which had aroused my curiosity on the up journey. On the left bank, two or three hundred yards back from the river, stood a group of small hills perhaps a hundred feet high. They were so regularly spaced and so uniform in size that they had caught my eye at once. A second examination left no doubt in my mind. They were certainly not natural, but man-made—small primitive earth pyramids, perhaps the prototypes of the great pyramids which are scattered over much of Central America. We had no time then for further investigation, but I marked this spot as one which would repay an archeological expedition in the future. I was to find similar earth-works later on to confirm

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my belief that Darien was once the site of an ancient pyramid-building civilization which was destroyed long before the Spaniards arrived in the New World.

We reached Avellino's village at sunset. I had intended to take the whole party back to the base camp that evening. But Avellino greeted me with a broad smile and announced that he would not permit us to leave. In three days would come the Chocoi harvest festival, and he wanted us all to attend as his guests. This was too good to miss. No outsiders had ever seen this ceremony before. So I left the three scientists, Brin, Breder, and Baer with Avellino and departed down the Rio Chico in the moonlight, promising to return in three days.

We reached Camp Townsend about midnight. All was well. The men we had left behind had made good progress with their geological, meteorological, and geodetic surveys. But the most interesting news was that a strange type of Indian had appeared at the base of the hills a hundred yards back from the camp. They had arrived about dusk on the last two evenings, but had not come closer. Apparently they were not Chocois, but a mountain tribe which came overland to inspect our camp. They wore white cotton shirts and dark blue trousers which extended half way to the ankle. There were about a dozen of them, all men, and their appearance had caused some apprehension in the camp.

This was good news for me. My whole plan was to make friends with successive groups of Indians. I hoped that knowledge of our good intentions would spread from group to group, and would finally penetrate up the Chucunaque past the dead-line of the Rio Membrillo. So the next morning I looked forward eagerly for the appearance of the strange Indians on the edge of the forest.

I waited in vain all the morning, writing up my diary and making an inventory of stores and food supplies. Early in the

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afternoon a group of Avellino's Chocois came down the river. Among them were a man and wife who were to remain with us, the man as a hunter to provide fresh meat and the woman as a laundress. All the Darien Indians are very scrupulous in keeping what little clothes they wear fresh and clean, seldom wearing any garment two days in succession, and Avellino had apparently noted our lack of observance of this very essential habit to health and cleanliness.

At last, just before dusk, the strange Indians appeared on the edge of the forest. The Chocois in camp showed some alarm and repeated the words "Cuna" and "Mata." The new visitors were a silent, dignified group, very different from the joyous, child-like Chocois, but they did not look unfriendly. I went forward to speak with their leader, who stood a few feet ahead of his men.

To my surprise the leader addressed me in Spanish with the words "*Buenos Dias, Señor.*" I answered "*Buenos Dias, Capitan,*" and we shook hands in the white-man style. Then he explained that he had heard of my arrival at Yavisa, and had come down from the Pucro Valley near Mt. Tacarcuna to visit me. He learned on his arrival that I was absent and so had waited for me to return before visiting camp. He hoped to be my friend, and he wanted me to visit him at his home where he had "the biggest house in all the world."

From the first moment I had an instinctive liking for this upright, straightforward, ceremonial and dignified Chief, José Mata, as he proved to be. The "José" was undoubtedly Spanish, but the "Mata" was truly Indian. For some strange reason, Darien Indians who have had contact with the outside world love to assume foreign names in addition to their own more picturesque and resounding Indian names.

Chief Mata said that he was the "Jefe" or head of the Cuna Cuna people (Tule tribe), who lived in the vicinity of

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Mt. Tacarcuna, partly in the upper Tuyra drainage area west of the main "Serrania del Darien" and partly in the practically unknown Atrato River valley in Colombia. Formerly, he said, his people were a numerous tribe, but in recent years they had died off rapidly. The surviving few were drifting apart and breaking up their tribal organization. He hoped I would help his people overcome their misfortunes. When I asked him where he had learned his Spanish, he said he had lived for two years in Panama City. I was later to learn how he had "lived" in Panama. The chief then presented an attractive, intelligent young Indian whom he described as his "secretary," who also spoke and wrote a little Spanish. The rest of his party he did not introduce. They were evidently less important.

I brought the whole party into camp, introduced the chief and his "secretary" to the white members of our expedition, and invited them to dinner with us in the mess tent as honored guests. The other Cuna Cunas were invited to eat with the Chocoi Indians, but this they refused to do. They remained by themselves and were finally served from the mess tent as a separate group. The disdain which the Cunas felt for the Chocois was very evident. They apparently considered themselves far superior, a superiority borne out by their manner if not by their physique. The Chocois were taller, and decidedly more muscular. But mentally, there was no question as to the superiority of the Cunas. José Mata never relaxed, but maintained a ceremonious, almost austere, dignity which contrasted sharply with the irresponsible spontaneity of the Chocois.

After dinner the chief asked me again to visit his "biggest house in all the world" on the Pucro. I told him I had promised to visit Chief Avellino first. I would come to visit him later. After that I planned to go up the Chucunaque River. He looked very serious. I must not go up the Chucunaque, he said. The Indians there were very bad, and would kill me and

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all my party. But, I asked him, weren't the Indians up the Chucunaque a Tule race related to the Cunas? We wanted to be friends with all the Tules and we hoped he would go with us and introduce us to the Chucunaque Indians.

Mata shook his head. It was true, he said, that his people were of the same race and spoke the same language as the Sucubti Cunas of the upper Chucunaque. Long ago they all lived together as one tribe near the gold fields of Cana. When the Spaniards first came to Cana, the Indians tried to be friends with them, but the Spaniards killed so many of the Indians and treated the rest so badly that all the Cunas moved away to Mount Tacarcuna. The climate there was so bad that most of them moved again and joined other Tule tribes up the Chucunaque. A few of them, still hoping to get back their old home at Cana, had remained at Tacarcuna and tried again to be friendly with the Spaniards. For this reason the other Tules had turned against them and now would not permit any of the Tacarcuna Cunas to join them up the Chucunaque. They would kill him and his people even quicker than they would kill me.

I asked if he knew of any white Indians. He said that formerly there were many on the upper Tuyra and even around Yavisa. But now most of them were far up the Chucunaque, beyond the Sucubti Cunas, the Mortis and the Wallas. There were still a few near his people, some on the Rio Paca and some on the Rio Paya. When I came to visit him, he would take me to see them.

After a leisurely dinner and long talk, I presented Chief Mata with a new pipe and some black navy plug tobacco, and then led him to the tent where I kept my more valuable presents. I gave him a single barreled shotgun with brass shells, cups, powder, shot, and reloading apparatus. The "secretary" got an Ingersoll watch, a fountain pen and a tablet of paper.

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All the other Cunas received machetes, but no baubles or beads, such as pleased the Chocois. Then I asked Mata how many wives he had. He replied disdainfully, "The Tule men are not Chocois. They have only one wife." I cut off three yards of my cloth of gold, telling him to give it to his wife. His face lit up with appreciation. "I have also a young grown daughter," he said, "the most beautiful in Darien." So I cut off another three yards of the gold cloth for "the most beautiful daughter in Darien."

I told him I would leave with most of my party for Avelino's place the next morning, to be gone for three days, but that he and his party were welcome to stay at our camp until my return, when I would go with him up the Pucro. He said he would leave early in the morning and be back in three days with his wife and daughter, who would like to see our camp. Then we would all return together. His Indians could make the round trip overland in three days, but that we had better go up by canoe, which would take much longer.

That night I put Chief Mata and his "secretary" in a vacant tent and had a large fly put up in front for his followers. Early next morning they filed away into the jungle behind our camp saying they would be back in three days, and we prepared, with our somewhat neglected Chocois, for the return trip up the Rio Chico to Avellino's village.

CHAPTER XIII

HARVEST FESTIVAL

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THIS time, with plenty of expert Chocoi canoemen, we arrived at Avellino's house early in the afternoon. The festivities were scheduled for that night, the time of the full moon. Already preparations were under way. But first, we were told, it was necessary for all of us to be formally adopted into the tribe. This ceremony consisted of decorating the entire body from the face to the knees with painted designs in a vegetable pigment which darkened quickly to a deep blue. The design was generally painted on with a small brush, but in my case I was to be honored by having the chief's eldest wife decorate me by means of a carved wooden block which was first covered with the pigment and then pressed against the bare skin.

The scientists who had stayed with Avellino were already stripped to make-shift gee-strings and painted in various designs. Brin, the botanist, was covered with circles and triangles. Baer, the Smithsonian anthropologist, had curved designs like feathers. Breder, the ichthyologist from the American Museum of Natural History, was decorated with snakes and frogs in dark blue.

The new arrivals were soon stripped to gee-strings and seated on carved log stools in front of Avellino's house, while the women of the tribe proceeded with the decorations, study-

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ing the effect produced on their living canvases with much artistic attention. Between the criticism of the already decorated scientists and the comments of each of us as he observed the growing patterns on his companions, it was difficult to observe that degree of decorum and gravity which the Indians attached to the ceremony.

Finally our mirth became so uncontrollable that Avellino stationed a stalwart guard with a shotgun in front of us. I think it was only a good-natured hint that we were supposed to be serious, for the female artists who were operating upon us made matters all the more difficult by jabbing us with their sharp brushes when they wished us to expose another portion of our anatomy for treatment, and by giggling uncontrollably. Some of these decorations were quite effective. I have seen marvelously painted young Indian girls who would create a furore in any Broadway musical show. This operation over, we had time to inspect the other preparations inside and outside of the big house.

Great quantities of flowers, yellow, red, and blue, were being brought in by the children and turned over to the older women who were supervising the decoration, just as they do in our village church entertainments. Long palm slivers cut in strips an inch or two wide were arched like doorways between the upright posts of the house, and festooned with wreaths of flowers.

In the center of the main floor stood a small structure about ten feet square and six feet high. The sides were of loose palm strips, and the thatched roof was decorated with many dangling tassels of decorative grass and flowers. From an overhanging roof extension at each corner were suspended small bits of silver, iron, stone, and glass, which were spaced close enough to jingle when the flexible floor was shaken. This house was the "*pièce de résistance*" of the whole scheme, a

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Holy of Holies. It gave the effect of a beautiful little playhouse in the center of the big room.

Inside were two carved wooden alligators five feet long with scales represented by painted blue dots, and on them stood a much smaller toy house, like a large bird cage, three feet high. Its sides were formed of small wooden statues, rather like the painted designs on my own body, which represented "Sua-mi-mis" or the messengers of the "Great Spirit." More of these figures hung from the overhanging eaves of the house so that nothing, not even the air, could enter without passing close to them.

While this apparatus was being erected, the women were preparing large amounts of corn meal, "chicha," fermented sugar cane drinks in hollow logs like small dugout canoes several feet long, and a really nice confection made from shredded coconut meat, native chocolate and coarse brown sugar. Great pots of plantains, rice, vegetables, fish and meat were cooking on the fireplace. In general, the whole proceeding gave the effect of a community festival in one of our agricultural districts.

I had been watching a group of a dozen young girls being prepared for the ceremony. Their bodies were elaborately painted, their long black hair was decorated with bright flowers, and around their necks hung brilliant necklaces of flowers, beads, carved wooden figures, shells, bright red seeds, and silver. The four leading girls wore crowns made of short upright wooden spear-heads, painted and decorated. They were very brilliantly and freshly attired except for their rather shabby cotton loin cloths. Presently they came over to me to exhibit their dilapidated skirts just like a young American daughter when she wants a new dress. The appeal was unmistakable. They were evidently to be the leading ladies of the performance, and they wanted to look their best. So I pro-

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duced a scant strip of my gold cloth for each. Their delight was reward enough.

Avellino mingled generally with the crowd, giving commands to his people with quiet authority and receiving constant new arrivals. These he brought to us to shake hands with awkward formality, for we were his prize exhibits. They were a picturesque lot. The men wore garlands of flowers in their hair, large silver earrings, and bands of beads over their shoulders, waists, and thighs. The women wore loin cloths, necklaces, and flowers in their hair. The young boys were generally frankly naked, but the little girls invariably had their loin cloths.

By dusk fully a hundred men and at least three hundred women and children were swarming inside, outside, and beneath the big house. Then all were invited by Avellino to the feast. We new white members of the tribe mixed indiscriminately with the others. The four "princesses" and their attendants served the food. Our plates were squares of clean banana leaves, our utensils were our fingers, but those Indian women can do things with corn meal and other simple ingredients that would bring envy to any American cook. The drinks, served in native gourds, were various combinations of "chicha," chocolate, crushed banana and fermented sugar cane juice. Some were quite mild and "soft," but others had an appreciable kick.

After the meal the plentiful remains were stored away on the overhanging floor outside the guard rail. Then the grown men and women seated themselves on the long benches inside the outer railings, while the children squatted on the floor in front. Small wooden stools, carved of solid logs, were brought for our party of honored guests, and we were seated opposite the entrance of the "play-house."

By this time it was dark, and the building was dimly

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lighted with native torches, which are worth describing. They consist of about twenty nuts of the *almendra* tree, rather like nutmegs in size and shape. They are strung tight against each other on a long sliver of black palm and give a light about as bright as a common kerosene lantern. As one nut is consumed, it lights the next one. We timed these torches and found each nut burned for about five minutes. A string of twenty nuts would therefore burn with a fair light for about an hour and forty minutes. This torch is universal among both the Chocois and the Tules of Darien. I have never seen it elsewhere.

The ceremony was about to begin. Avellino told us he was going to call the Tribal Spirit and talk to him. We must keep very quiet and under no circumstances were we to use our electric flash lights, as they would frighten the Spirit away. The girl priestesses brought two elaborately carved wooden stools and placed them inside the "summer-house," facing the alligator heads and the "bird-cage." Next they brought a small baby, which Avellino told us was sick, and laid it on its back inside the "bird-cage." Then Avellino produced a great bundle of wooden canes, all with carved figures, animal and human, at their upper ends. Some represented twining snakes, some had turtle heads, fish heads, bird heads, jaguar heads, etc.... He entered the "play-house," seated himself on one of the stools, facing the "bird-cage," and laid the canes on the floor between him and the adjacent empty stool. The almendra-nut torches were extinguished, and Avellino began a long sing-song rhythmical chant, picking up cane after cane and waving it before the sick baby. He was calling the "Sua-mi-mis" or "Little Spirits" to come and help it get well.

As all Darien Indians know, healing is one of the chief functions of "Sua-mi-mis." When they appear, you can also send messages by them to the Great Spirit, which they must

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deliver. Avellino's message was to ask the Great Spirit to send the Tribal Spirit to come and sit on the reserved stool beside him and give him a forecast of the future. Apparently the Tribal Spirit is not the Great Spirit but a powerful subordinate.

Avellino's rhythmic chant went on, as cane after cane was waved slowly before the sick baby. Then the four priestesses, leading the other girls, formed a circle around the "summer-house" and danced with a swaying prancing gait, slowly around it. Avellino's chant became louder and faster. The girls' pace quickened. One of our white party made an audible remark. Immediately an Indian came to him, and firmly but not unpleasantly, indicated that he was not to talk. The chant continued. The dance kept on. Various men from the audience joined the dancers until the ring would hold no more.

The effect of the monotonous song and the slow dance was powerfully hypnotic. The Indians seemed rigid and expectant, but the white men, who did not understand their language or share their religious emotions, began to get very sleepy. At last Breder's head dropped on his chest. At once an Indian came forward and shook him forcibly. The dancers stood still. The audience murmured indignantly.

Avellino stopped his chanting and came over to where we sat. He explained reproachfully that he was having a hard time bringing the Sua-mi-mis. If they did not come, his people would blame it on us and cease to be our friends. He would try again, but we mustn't move, or make any noise, or go to sleep. We must try to "think" the Sua-mi-mis into the house.

We promised, and he went back to his stool. The chanting, dancing, and wand-waving went on. We whites concentrated honestly on calling the Sua-mi-mis. Again the chant and dancing rose in tempo. The Indians were hypnotized completely now, and we were partly so. At last Avellino's voice stopped. The dancers stood still. Avellino mumbled an almost inaudible

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prayer, which continued for some time. We could see nothing beyond the silent circle of dancers, but we shared the feeling of superstitious tension which filled the room.

Then suddenly the tension relaxed. A woman ran in with a hysterical cry and picked up the sick baby. The dancers scattered to the outer benches. And Avellino came over to us with an expression of satisfied relief on his face and asked for a drink of rum. He said the Sua-mi-mis had come and promised that the baby would get well. They had brought the Tribal Spirit, who had sat on the stool and promised that the next year would be a prosperous one. He had also stated that we were good friends of the tribe. We hadn't seen any spirits, but perhaps they came nevertheless. The baby did get well promptly, and the Chocois remained our good friends for the rest of our stay.

The performance was over. The torches were re-lighted, and we all had a midnight feast on the remains of the big dinner. Most of the Indians drank until they were in a drunken stupor and behaved much like our own civilized drunks, except there was no fighting and no sensuousness—just maudling friendly intoxication. At last we all went to sleep.

Next morning we got up rather late. Torpid Indians were still sleeping all over the place. It was noon before we could round up enough Indian boys to take our canoes downstream to Camp Townsend for a night of much needed sleep.

CHAPTER XIV

PUCRO

*

NEXT day, an hour before dusk, Chief José Mata and his retinue appeared at the base of the hills in the rear of Camp Townsend, and I went out to welcome and escort them to camp. I was later to learn that all the Tule tribes make their formal calls just before sunset. During the daytime the men are generally away, only the women and children remaining in the villages, and it is not good Tule form to make visits when the men-folk are not at home.

This time Chief Mata was accompanied by his wife, his daughter—"the most beautiful in Darien," his two grown sons, his "secretary," and several men attendants. The men wore their regular costumes—hand-woven straw hats, cotton shirts, and short dark-blue trousers. Each carried a machete, and the chief a carved walking stick, which is the insignia of authority among all the Darien Indians.

The costumes of the women showed most clearly the great difference between the Tules and the Chocois. Instead of the short loin cloths, the Tule women wore long skirts of brightly appliquéd cotton quilting, and short sleeved, high necked blouses of the same material. Over the head and shoulders they wore red shawls. From their ears hung circular disks of pure gold as thick as a dime and three inches in diameter. In addition, each woman wore through the septum of her nose a solid

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gold ring hanging down level with the upper lip. No Tule woman, in her native environment, is ever without such a nose ring. The girls' noses are pierced when they are a day or so old. The rings get larger and heavier as the girls grow up.

We were presented by Chief Mata to his wife and daughter and shook hands with them in formal manner. I had a large tent with three army cots ready for the chief and the women, and a fly for his male attendants. Soon we were all seated in our folding chairs in front of my headquarters tent. The chief was supplied with fresh tobacco for his pipe, and at his suggestion another pipe and tobacco were provided for his wife. Neither his daughter nor his sons smoked—perhaps because they were as yet unmarried. The portable victrola was put to work, and I had an opportunity to observe our new guests.

The chief's wife was a dignified, slender, handsome woman of about forty. I paid her all the customary formal attentions, but my interest centered naturally in "the most beautiful daughter in Darien." Carmelita, for that was her "Spanish" name, was about sixteen years old, and was by any standards a very attractive and pretty girl. After one got used to it the nose ring didn't seem to hurt her looks. Her complexion was light olive—as light as a southern Italian. Her hair was straight glossy black, combed back from the face and ears. Her face was oval with regular, well-proportioned features. Carmelita was very well mannered, completely self-possessed, demure without being shy or hesitant, and she showed a frank girlish interest in what was going on. Unfortunately, unlike her father and mother, she spoke almost no Spanish.

One feature of her attire was truly striking. Her head shawl, about five by three feet, was of thin red cotton with a large figure of a jaguar or *tigre* worked in the center in yellow surrounded by a border of red hearts on a yellow backing. I

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do not know where the inspiration for that design came from, but it was very artistically executed. At my suggestion she proudly spread it out on the ground, thereby uncovering her own pretty head, with the large gold earrings enhanced by the background of dark hair. Even the nose ring began to be attractive.

Chaperoned by the chief, I led Carmelita and her mother into my office tent and presented them with samples of about everything I had—cloth of gold, red and blue cotton cloth, scissors, mirrors, combs, needles, thread, etc. Finally a jar of English candies capped the climax. Chief Mata, on seeing the gorgeous presents given his women folk, glanced rather ruefully at his own clean but somewhat worn clothing. The chief was about my size, so I took him back into my sleeping tent and presented him with a pair of white duck trousers, a pair of white tennis shoes, white cotton socks and garters, and a gray felt hat. He made a quick change under my supervision and emerged proudly in his new clothes to receive the admiration of his family and followers.

From then on, as I had hoped, Carmelita devoted all her attention to me. I stated to the rest of my party, in English, that it was evidently due to my own superior good looks. But the others insisted it was because I gave out all the presents. There may have been some truth in their charge, but the chief of the party among more primitive peoples is entitled to certain prerogatives, and I was becoming very fond of Carmelita, the "Tiger Princess of the Pucro," as we called her from then on.

The chief, his two sons, and his "secretary," joined us at our dinner table. The women were served separately in their chairs. For dessert, we had canned cherries, a fruit unknown to the tropics. Chief Mata, on tasting his cherries, was so pleased with them that he carried his portion over and presented it to his wife and daughter, who had not yet been



Princess Carmeleta of Pucro



R. O. Marsh Being Decorated by Chocoi

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served. It was the first real sign which I had seen of the regard and affection the Tule men always show their women. Much as I liked Avellino, I could not imagine him giving anything he liked very much himself to either of his wives.

I had promised Chief Mata to visit him at his "biggest house in all the world" on the Pucro, an easterly tributary of the Upper Tuyra. So he said he would return there overland the next day to prepare for our arrival, but would leave his "secretary," eldest son, and several of his men to take us to Pucro in canoes by the water route. Whether there was any mystery about that land route from Yavisa to Pucro, or whether it was just so difficult they did not want us to use it, I never was quite certain. Even later, when I had demonstrated my ability to "hit the trail" practically as well as the Cunas, they would never let me take the land route.

Chief Mata, his wife, Carmelita, and most of his followers departed in the morning. The following day our "Flying Squadron," with six Cunas, left in two canoes with outboard motors for the long trip down the Chucunaque and thence up the Upper Tuyra to the mouth of the Pucro, which we ascended about twenty miles to Chief Mata's village.

The route up the Upper Tuyra to the mouth of the Pucro follows along the old route to the Cana gold mines. Above the negro village of Real de Santa Maria we encountered much shallow, rapid water, which made our motors useless and progress slow. On the right bank we passed the dilapidated negro villages of Pinogana and Boca de Cupe. All along this river route, at least as far up as the Paya River, there is an understanding that the right bank belongs to the negroes and the left to the Indians.

On the left bank we passed the mouths of two considerable rivers, the Yape and the Capeti, before reaching the Pucro. The Yape River valley is occupied by Chocoi Indians, and

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near its junction with the Upper Tuyra is one of the largest and most beautiful circular Chocoi houses in Darien—one hundred feet in diameter, at least, with a high conical roof. We landed to inspect it, but as all the men were away we left some trinkets for the frightened women and children and proceeded on our course.

The Capeti River valley is occupied by Tules, but owing to some jealousy between Chief Mata and the chief of the Capetis we did not then know any of this particular branch of the Cuna Cunas.

At noon on the third day out from Camp Townsend we reached the mouth of the Pucro and turned eastward toward the high distant peak of Mount Tacarcuna. This stretch up the Pucro was very hard going, with numerous log jams clear across the narrow stream and swift rocky stretches of rapids. At just about the practical head of canoe navigation, we came at dusk to Chief Mata's "private home"—a cluster of medium sized Tule type houses on a bench about fifty yards back from the river. Our aneroid barometer showed an elevation of 280 feet above sea level. We had risen most of that height in the fifteen miles' ascent up the Pucro. Ten miles beyond stood Mount Tacarcuna, 7,400 feet high.

The chief, his wife, Carmelita, and about thirty other Indians welcomed us. A large open sided structure was turned over for our use. The chief explained that his "big house" was still some distance farther up-stream, but as it was late and the water low, we would continue there by land the next day.

It was our first experience in a Tule house, which we found to be vastly different from a Chocoi house. All Tule houses are built rectangular on the level of the ground with strong black palm sides and high thatched roofs. The better Tule houses are two stories high with an upper floor reached by notched log stairs. The lower floor of hard, clean earth, is

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used for general day-time purposes, and the upper floor for sleeping and storage. In the rear of each main house is a smaller one for cooking. Their fires are built on the same principle as those of the Chocoi. Each Tule establishment, consisting of a main two story house, an open-sided summer-house, and a small kitchen, is generally surrounded by a stout six foot fence of black-palm pickets, presumably to protect the numerous chickens from jaguars and other animals.

Here also we saw the first real weapons. The Chocois had nothing but fish spears, but hung along the walls of every Tule house were long black-palm bows, very long arrows, and blowguns with their small but vicious darts. It is these blowguns which put fear into the hearts of the Chocoi, for the Tules are experts with poison, which they invariably use on their blow-gun darts and occasionally on their arrows.

As we learned later, the Tule employ two kinds of poison, the constituents of both of which were kept a profound secret from us. One poison is painfully deadly. The other produces immediate temporary paralysis which disappears in about half an hour. With this paralysis poison the Tule capture alive many wild animals and birds, which at first are stricken helpless and later generally recover.

There is a definitely grim, sinister, and serious side to the Tule nature which is never found among the simple peace-loving childlike Chocoi. All in all, I believe these Cuna Cuna or Tacarcuna Tules to be the saddest people I have ever encountered. When I came to know them better I could understand and sympathize with them.

Soon after our arrival we had a splendid supper of native vegetables and roast wild peccary. Chief Mata said there was to be a great "fiesta" in our honor in the "big house" the following night, so we restricted our evening entertainment this night to playing our victrola records.

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I reminded the chief that he had promised to take me to the white Indians whom I understood lived in the headwaters of the Paca, a river coming into the Upper Tuyra from the west a few miles above the mouth of the Pucro. He replied that there was a small group of "Chepu Tules" there, but it was a hard three-day trip from his place, and they had heard that we were hunting white Indians and had all moved over toward the Atrato River in Colombia. He thought, however, that some of them were stopping with the Paya Tules, only about three hours by land trail to the southeast of his village. The Paya Tules, he said, were very bad Indians, but he would send a messenger to their chief and see if he could take me to visit them. I told him to do the best he could. What I wanted most was to find some of the white Indians.

Then I asked him to tell me about his stay in Panama City. He hesitated. Finally with a most appealing and despondent gesture he told me the following tale. About twenty-five years earlier, when he was young and unmarried, he fell in love with the daughter of the chief of the Capeti Tules, now his wife. At that time the gold mines at Cana were being worked. Many Spaniards and negroes were passing up and down the Tuyra, and the "Spanish" Church had established a mission with a priest at Real. This priest converted many of the near-by Indians, including the chief of the Capetis, but Mata did not like the "Spanish" religion and would not be converted. The Capeti chief would not let him marry his daughter, so he ran away with her and married her according to the Indian custom.

Later he took her to Real for a visit. There he was seized and arrested by "Spanish" soldiers and taken to Panama City and put in prison. His wife followed him, and did hard work in the "Spanish" houses as a laundress and servant, but always came to see him at the prison fence every afternoon. Finally

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he got away from the jail after two years, secured a small canoe, and he and his wife returned all the way down the Pacific coast and up the Tuyra to his old home on the Pucro after "a hard time." The "Spanish" soldiers came after him again and he and his wife had to go high up on Mt. Tacarcuna, where it was very cold and there were "bad spirits," until the Cana mines shut down and the "Spanish" soldiers and the priest went back to Panama City. Even now he did not know when the soldiers would come for him again.

At first he had thought my large party at Yavisa was after him because I had a "Spanish" captain with me. So he had spied on me, and when he found out how nice I was to the Chocois and how I did not like the Spanish captain (he guessed it), and because I was one of the "great Americans" who built the big canal, he decided to try to make friends with me and get my help.

All during this very painful statement, the chief's wife sat beside him holding his hand with as simple and noble a sympathy as I have seen anywhere. I told the chief that no harm would come to him if I could help it. President Porras was my friend, and I was sure he would not send any more soldiers. As for the Panamanian captain, it was true I did not like him and would soon send him back to Panama City.

That night we rigged up our army cots under the roof of the open-sided house. The chief slung his hammock from poles near us. All the Tules are hammock-sleeping people. I went to sleep still in a rage over Chief Mata's experience in Panama and determined to do what I could for him.

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CHAPTER XV

“THE BIGGEST HOUSE IN ALL THE WORLD”

*

NEXT morning we had an opportunity to observe the surroundings of a Tule establishment. Besides the usual patches of plantains, bananas, yucca, etc., we found a grove of twenty-foot perennial cotton trees with exceptionally long-staple cotton. Some of it was naturally pink, and Chief Mata said they also raised a blue variety. There was also a cultivated grove of native rubber trees, showing many tapping scars. They were not the *Hevea Brasiliensis* but the variety known as *Castillao Elastica* which produces a rubber appreciably tougher but not as elastic as that of the *Hevea*. The *Castillao Elastica* is not as practical a plantation tree as the *Hevea Brasiliensis*, because its yield is lower per tree and per acre. Seeing my interest, Mata explained that the Tules made water-proof coverings out of home-spun cotton dipped in the sap and cured over a fire fed with palm nuts. I later had Mata's tribe make me a number of large rubberized sacks in which to carry many of our things, and found they gave perfect protection from water during the ensuing rainy season.

Then, leaving our heavier luggage at the chief's "private home," we took a land trail along the river to the "big house" about four miles up-stream. It *was* a big house—about 150 feet long by 75 feet wide. The end walls, instead of being straight,

"BIGGEST HOUSE IN ALL THE WORLD"

were three-sided like bay windows. The floor was of hard packed earth. In one end was a sort of platform like a stage about two feet high, supported by a retaining wall of logs. The high peaked roof was supported on very clever roof trusses upheld by four columns of posts. The house was in excellent repair. It was clearly intended not for domestic use but as a sort of convention hall and community center for the surrounding Tules.

We arrived about mid-morning. Already about one hundred Indians were there, and were starting individual fires for cooking outside the house. A beautiful clear little mountain stream ran fifty yards away. The Indians, who were all of Chief Mata's Pucro tribe, seemed to want to do what they could for us, but they had a markedly despondent air about them. The chief said he had wanted the neighboring Cuna tribes to join in our fiesta but owing to a great deal of sickness and death in his own tribe recently, his people were so poor they could not supply enough food for many visitors. So I told him to send out messengers to the surrounding tribes and tell them to come and bring their food with them. I would pay them whatever he said was right, either in Panamanian silver coins, or machetes and cloth.

This news brought the first sign of real joy I had yet seen among those people. I wanted, for once at least, to break that spell of sadness and bring some temporary happiness to them. Mata sent out his messengers. Other men went back to the "private house" to bring up our baggage, in which I had a considerable supply of cloth, machetes, trinkets, etc.

Then, with the chief's family, we appropriated the raised platform for our personal quarters. Our army cots were set up. The Indians slung their hammocks from the supporting columns, and the portable victrola was put in action. I showed the chief's "secretary" how to operate it and then went out to

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wander around the premises. I had given Chief Mata about twenty dollars in small denomination Panamanian silver coins and left him to do the marketing. I was tired and wanted to get away from all the hubbub.

On the opposite bank of the nearby stream, well up on the hillside, was a very neat little Indian house, commanding a beautiful view. I climbed up the trail, found the house unoccupied, with an inviting hammock slung between the poles. So I got into it for a nap. After perhaps an hour I awakened. A young Indian woman, about twenty, was busy-ing herself with the wheel-spoke fire in the far corner. She saw that I was awake and motioned with her hand for me to remain in the hammock. Then she poured out a steaming calabash of thick native chocolate and brought it to me with a most kindly hospitable smile, standing near and looking down at me while I drank it.

She was a very beautiful young woman, with a splendid figure and the very light olive skin typical of so many of the mountain Cunas. She had done me the honor of treating me as a familiar house guest, not as a stranger. That is, in accordance with Tule woman's custom within the confines of her own house, she had taken off her long skirt and appliquéd blouse and was dressed like the Chocoi women in merely a short loin cloth. I had decided to attempt no amorous adventures among the Indians as I knew the resentment such affairs can cause. But I could not help thinking that a thatched hut on a mountain side with such an Indian woman could be an earthly paradise for a while at least.

There were by now over two hundred Indians present around the "Big House" and more continually arriving. But since the great majority of them, including all the new-comers, were men, I concluded that the women and children present were all of Chief Mata's own small tribe. Mata was in front

"BIGGEST HOUSE IN ALL THE WORLD"

of the big house, bargaining with newcomers who brought fruit, vegetables, and meat—wild pig, agouti, tapir, and iguana. Some of the meat looked all right, some very doubtful. Mata bargained with authoritative decision and the food was sent to the cooking fires.

I decided to give a big splurge in the chief's honor and use up all the fireworks I had brought with me to the village. Posts were erected in front of the big house for pin wheels; chutes were prepared for the big military signal rockets; and the colored flares were arranged in a semicircle. By dark the big meal was ready. The only drinks were soft drinks—chocolate, a squashed banana mush, and a corn drink like unfermented chicha. There had been no time to prepare fermented concoctions. Our own stock of liquor served as cocktails for a select few.

The meal was served out of doors in front of the big house. Long wooden benches and numerous small artistically carved log stools were brought from inside. The food was served by the women on clean squares of banana leaf and the drinks in calabashes. At last there was a semblance of real gayety. The bright-eyed children scampered around in joyous anticipation. The men and particularly the women had happy smiles. About the end of the meal we whites showed off our fireworks against the dark jungle background to as appreciative an audience as at any county fair.

CHAPTER XVI

PAYA

*

MATA had told me that the next group of Tules were the Paya Cunas in the first main valley to the south. Their chief village, Paya, was only three hours away by land. They were "bad Indians" so the chief said, but several of their men had come to our fiesta the night before, and I felt they were assured of our friendliness. Besides, Chief Mata thought some of the white Indians from the Paca River were staying at Paya. So I told him I wanted him to take us over to Paya where we could spend the night, visit these "bad Indians" and perhaps see some of the white ones.

Quite reluctantly the chief agreed. He said he did not know what kind of treatment we would get from the Paya people. They were "bad." They would steal and lie. They were not good friends of his. But with six Americans and a good following of the Pucro Indians, I did not fear trouble. I felt, however, that we had better go well armed. Each man carried a large belt pistol and either a rifle or a shotgun. Chief Mata took about a dozen of his young men to help carry our equipment.

It was to be our first real overland hike in the jungle and I wanted to see how we would stand up under it. All of our trips heretofore had been made in canoes. My companions all wore regulation army uniform—heavy high shoes, khaki

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breeches tight at the knees, khaki shirts, heavy leather puttees and felt hats. This is about the worst possible costume for the tropics, but I knew the others would cling to it until they learned better. My own clothes had long since been standardized. I wore a thin white shirt, light white cotton trousers without cuffs, low tennis shoes, and white socks pinned outside the trouser legs to keep out insects. Of course such garments wear out quickly, but they are so light that ample changes can be carried. Next to going practically naked, as the Indians do when exercising, this is the most sensible costume for comfort and health in hot climates.

Our party was on the trail by ten A.M. The Indian porters carried large wicker baskets on their backs, suspended by broad bands across their foreheads. Chief Mata sent a runner on ahead to inform the Paya Cunas we were on our way to visit them, and to arrange for the use of a house for the night. It was getting near to the rainy season, and the very heavy night dews made some night shelter advisable.

The trail crossed innumerable small hills and valleys and gradually gained elevation. My American companions soon swore it was the worst trail they had ever attempted, and from then on they continued swearing at it. The army men, in pretty good physical condition, struggled on in their ridiculous heavy costume because army regulations prescribe such attire for tropical use. But Charlton and Benton had no such respect for official regulations. First went their khaki shirts, then their absurd leather puttees. Only my suggestion that they pull off their heavy tight breeches also and be comfortable prevented their stubborn natures from complying. They were afraid I might take their pictures. Later, however, they overcame their reluctance.

That "three hours" distance by Indian reckoning took us a full seven hours, not including an hour off for lunch and

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rest. We arrived at the village of Paya at just about dusk. Chief Mata had shown considerable apprehension during the latter part of our trip, for the runner had returned and given him some unpleasant news. The Paya Indians, it appeared, did not want us to come to their village. There was no house and no food available for us. They urged Mata to take us back to Pucro. But neither my party nor I was in any mood to turn back then when the greater part of the trip was accomplished.

Mata's forebodings were justified. The village was considerably larger than Pucro, located on a beautiful clear stream, the Paya River, between high rugged hills, and housing perhaps three hundred Indians. As we marched into the center of the village and deposited our belongings in a heap on the ground, we were surrounded by about fifty surly, defiant Indians. I told Chief Mata to ask where their chief was. He spoke to them in the Indian tongue, and they replied that their chief did not want to see us. It was getting dark, and we were all impatient. I asked Mata if he knew where the chief lived and he pointed to a large house fifty yards away. I directed Pabon, the Puerto Rican orderly, and the Pucro Indians to stay with our luggage, and taking Chief Mata and the four Americans, started for the chief's house.

We had just reached it when a clamor of shouting and scuffling broke out behind us. The Paya Indians had closed in on Pabon and the Pucro Indians, rushed them, seized our luggage, and then scattered through the village, having stolen about half our stuff. Pabon was stabbing with his rifle, wisely not shooting, and the Pucro Indians were brandishing their machetes. But no blood had been shed. As we turned and ran back to our group, the remaining Paya Indians all fled.

Naturally that put "blood in our eyes." I left three of our Americans with the Pucro Indians, to guard the remnants of our luggage, and went back with Mata and the two remaining

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Americans to the Paya chief's house. We entered. In the center of the floor, sitting on a low stool with his back against a post, was an old Indian, of rather good features, but half drunk. Behind him, sprawled flat on the ground, was an almost naked woman, very voluptuous, light skinned and good looking, but completely drunk. Around the old chief were about a dozen men, some surly and insolent, some unmistakably apprehensive.

I went up to the chief, with my rifle pointing at him, Mata at my side and my two American companions covering the other Indians. Chief Mata was as angry as I. I told him to tell the Paya Chief that his Indians had stolen half our belongings. I would give them a very short time to return everything they had taken. If everything was not returned, I would shoot the chief and every man in his tribe and burn every house in the village. A comparatively young, very insolent and vicious looking man standing next to the chief started to talk in Spanish. I told him to "shut up." I was talking to the chief and not to him. He replied, in Spanish, "I am the secretary." I uttered the vilest cuss word I knew in Spanish, something to do with dogs, told him again to "shut up" and pointed my rifle at him. He shut up.

By this time the old Paya chief was sobering up, and assuming a very worried and helpless expression. The girl was also sitting up and showing fright. The old chief looked appealingly to the secretary. After a conversation in the Indian language Mata turned to me and said the Paya chief had directed that all our things be returned.

I told him to tell the Paya chief that we would stay and watch him until everything was returned. I then told the "secretary" to tell the other men in the house to go out and hurry the return of our property, as I was getting tired of waiting, but he must remain with the chief as I wanted to watch

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him too. By this time they were all decidedly cowed. The other men left and I directed Mata to tell the old chief that we wanted a house for the night. The chief said to take whatever house we wanted. Mata knew the village, so I left that to him.

Then Mata delivered a severe lecture to the aged chief, and we three Americans selected stools and sat down to a smoke. Soon my companions called out that practically all the luggage had been brought back. We escorted the old chief and his secretary outside. Chief Mata picked out a large house. Our Pucro Indians carried our stuff over to it. The old chief ordered the family occupying it to move out, and we took possession. A quick inventory showed that all our belongings had been returned except the tripod of Charlton's camera, which did not come back until the next morning. A frightened Indian had thrown it into the jungle and fled.

A fire was already burning. We and the Pucro Indians prepared a long delayed meal. That night Chief Mata and his followers occupied the ground floor, while we Americans appropriated the second story.

But our sleep was interrupted. The Paya Chief, now fully sobered, came over alone to talk to Chief Mata. And how they talked! It was my first experience of the "bardizing" of the Tules. To me, half asleep upstairs, it was fascinating. But to my tired companions it was intensely irritating.

The conversation, as I learned later, was a report by each chief to the other about the "news." The "news," of course, was about us. These formal reports are delivered with a rhythmic cadence. First one would recite what sounded like a long poem in a sort of blank verse. Then the other would reply in like manner. The words were chanted rather than spoken. It reminded me somewhat of the long formal conversations I have heard among the Chinese.

The chant went on for hours. My companions tossed and

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cursed and asked me to intervene and send the old chief home to bed, but I persuaded them to keep quiet and let the vocal ceremony proceed. Eventually the sheer melodious monotony of it put us all to sleep.

A plunge in the cool stream near by and a good breakfast put our party in a better mood next morning. Chief Mata said we would have no more trouble with the Paya Indians. Soon a messenger came from the Paya chief, bringing me a present of a beautiful cane of the mysterious *cacique carré* wood.

This wood is one of the greatest botanical mysteries of the world, found, as far as I have been able to learn, only among the Panamanian Indians from Darien to Chirique. The tree from which it comes has never been identified by botanists. The wood itself is a very dark maroon with patches almost black. It is very fine grained; contains a great deal of natural oil, and takes a beautiful smooth polish. Its origin is kept a profound secret among the Darien Indians. A prominent scientific institution is reported to have had a standing offer for many years of twenty-five thousand dollars to any one who could identify the living tree. I have known a canny Chinese trader in Panama to pay fifty dollars for a piece of *cacique carré* three feet long and three inches in diameter. Finished, polished canes of this wood bring twenty-five dollars from the Chinese merchants.

Chief Mata later secured me a small piece of this wood, twelve inches long by an inch wide and a quarter of an inch thick, but he got it only after a ten day trip "to the mountains." Friend as he was, he would give me no definite information as to its source, but hinted that it came from underground. My two guesses, which are only guesses, are: first, that *cacique carré* may be *cacique colorado*, another deep red wood, which has been buried underground in a bog and become what

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lumbermen call "water cured"; second, that it may come from some rare underground vine, such as occurs in the tropics.

Besides certain magic qualities which the Indians attach to it, and besides its beauty, durability and fine texture, the wood has remarkable therapeutic value. An open and freely bleeding wound, always hard to stanch in the tropics, stops bleeding when fine powdered scrapings of the *cacique carré* are applied to it. I have demonstrated this to the satisfaction of medical men. The Indians claim that if a woman swallows some of the powdered *cacique carré*, it will stop menstruation. This I have not been able to verify.

I fully appreciated the gift from the Paya chief. A Darien Indian can give you nothing which he considers of greater value. So I sent back by the messenger a machete, a short hunting knife, some cloth of gold, and numerous small trinkets. Then we returned to the chief's house for a more formal visit. Again the "secretary" insinuated himself into the conference, but this time with deference. The chief explained that his "secretary" was the only member of his tribe who could speak Spanish and so could talk to the Chinese traders.

He said that the Sinclair Oil Company explorers had passed up his river looking for gold, and his Indians had become aroused, as they wanted no more gold hunters in their country. That, he said, was what made them opposed to our coming. Now that he had learned from Chief Mata that we were not looking for gold or for land, and had been friendly and helpful to all the Indians we had visited, he wanted to be friends with us. He hoped we would have a big fiesta such as we had at Pucro. His people would bring in plenty of food to sell to us. Also that he would like to return with us and visit our big camp at Yavisa.

I told him I had used up all the material I had with me, but would give him a "fiesta" when he came to Yavisa. His

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disappointment was evident, but I still resented the reception his people had given us and I was determined to get full return for anything I gave him. He suggested I give him a shotgun. I replied that I had no extra shotgun with me, but I had heard that the white Indians of the Paca were staying with him and that if he would take me to them I would give him my own fine shotgun. He replied that the white Indians had all gone over to the other side of Mount Tacarcuna. He could not get them to come back. He had no control over them.

Then, with the "secretary" as a guide, we wandered around the village, but entered no houses. The men and boys of the tribe came out to watch us, some to follow us, but we saw no women. These Paya men when seen in the daytime again impressed me as being in appearance far different from any other of the Indians we had seen anywhere else in Darien. There was a very oriental look about them. This impressed me so forcibly at the time that a discovery made nearly a year later, in Washington, D. C., has fascinated me ever since.

A Dr. C. K. L. Anderson, now living in Washington, who was formerly an army surgeon and had traveled extensively in Panama and Central America, gave me a copy of a book he had published privately, entitled "Old Panama and Castillo del Oro." In this book was a copy of a map of Panama dated 1671, which shows the route to the ancient gold mines of Cana with reasonable accuracy. And on the very site of the present settlement of Paya is a village called "Japonaca!"

Of course, this may be merely a remarkable coincidence. But it is well known that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Spanish ships plying between Panama and the Philippines often touched at Pacific islands and carried off slaves to replace the fast-dying Indians of the American colonies. Perhaps some of them were blown northward off their usual course and did their raiding on one of the outlying

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islands of Japan. If Japanese were ever brought to the Cuna gold mines, it is quite likely that some of them escaped, intermarried with Cuna Indians, and established themselves on the Upper Paya, retaining some of their original physical characteristics and the knowledge of their origin.

But whether the Paya people were Japanese hybrids or not, they were certainly not white Indians. So there wasn't any reason for our staying at Paya any longer, particularly since our supplies were running low.

Some of my white companions dreaded the return journey overland to Pucro. So I made a bargain with the old chief. If he would take my men and my luggage down to Yavisa by canoe, I would hold a big fiesta on his arrival and give him a shotgun and other presents. I would return to Pucro alone and bring Mata and the rest of our possessions down to Yavisa for the fiesta. This was satisfactory to every one.

That night we had an undisturbed sleep. Next morning the Paya chief, a dozen followers and the Americans of my party set off down the river for Camp Townsend. I had no fear for them. They were well armed, and the tension with the Indians had been relieved. As for myself, with rifle, shotgun, automatic, and Chief Mata's party, I was perfectly at ease.

CHAPTER XVII

CARMELITA

*

A LITTLE piqued at the way in which the Pucro Indians had good-naturedly derided our slow progress on the trip from Pucro to Paya, I played a rather strenuous trick on them. I was in pretty good physical condition and had been a fair long-distance runner in my school days. So I decided to demonstrate that all white men were not as slow on the trail as my companions.

I started with an advantage over all except Chief Mata. His followers still had light but appreciable loads to carry. The chief and I alone were unencumbered. I even placed my firearms, cartridge belt, camera and all accessories in the loads of the Indian porters, and started out with only my new cane of *cacique carré*.

That return trip, twelve miles by air line but considerably more by our route, became a cross country race with myself setting the pace. It was a run on the level and on descending grades, a walk only on the up grades, and no stops. I out-distanced the entire party, and reached the big house at Pucro in just three hours.

The story of that trip, with proper exaggerations, spread over all Darien. A year later, on the San Blas coast, I heard it repeated with satisfactory embellishments as evidence of my physical prowess.

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Naturally, on finding the big house at Pucro empty, I climbed to the little house on the hillside and had a rest in the hammock until Chief Mata and his followers straggled in below. There we all rested for about two hours, while the little lady of the hillside served us a light meal.

Chief Mata's wife and Carmelita soon appeared, and we decided to return to their "private home" farther down stream. The porters loaded up heavily with all our belongings, which had remained undisturbed in the big house. The chief's wife had a large basket on her back and Carmelita a small one. Then the chief did something that no Chocoi Indian, I feel sure, would have dreamed of doing. He took the big basket from off his wife's back and put it on his own, and the two proceeded side by side down the trail. As Dr. Fairchild later said, Chief Mata was a gentleman. What was I to do under the circumstances but transfer Carmelita's smaller load to my own back? So pleased was she that we also walked side by side down the trail, most of the distance, I believe, hand in hand.

That evening at Pucro has been a vivid and happy memory to me ever since. I was a welcome guest in that fine Indian family. I tried to teach Carmelita to dance to the white man's music from the portable victrola. Her brothers and the "secretary" improvised accompanying tunes on their flutes and Pan Pipes. Carmelita did her best, improving somewhat. The chief and his wife beamed approval, he smoking his new pipe filled with American Navy tobacco and she working on a new dress for Carmelita. It was as happy a family group as I have ever seen.

Then the chief looked at me seriously.

"Are you married?" he asked.

I told him that in my country we had a saying that no man is married when a thousand miles from home. He thought for a moment.

CARMELIT A

"Are you that far away from home?"

"More than twice that," I replied.

"Then you are entitled to two wives," he said, with a twinkle in his eye.

There was a pause.

"You marry Carmelita," said he, "and you will be chief of all the Tacarcuna tribes, and we will be rich and powerful again as we used to be."

I hesitated.

"You can have the girl on the hillside too if you want her."

Chief Mata was serious, and so was I. I walked over to him, put my hand on his shoulder and said, perhaps almost sadly, "Friend, I can't do it. This is my last night in Pucro. I go back to Yavisa tomorrow and then up the Chucunaque. Afterwards I return to America. But I have been very happy here and will try to come back some time and help you."

Carmelita rushed into the main house. I could hear her crying. The chief gripped my hand. The eagerness disappeared from the faces of the rest of the family. I put "Madam Butterfly" on the victrola, smoked my pipe in silence and thought what an ass I was.

In half an hour, little Carmelita reappeared smiling and forgiving, took my hand, and sat down on a low stool at my feet.

The chief and his wife shook my hand, wished me "Buenas noches, amigo," and retired into the main house. The rest of us followed and climbed into our hammocks.

CHAPTER XVIII

CHIEF BIBIA

*

NEXT morning early we started down the Pucro River in canoes, headed for Camp Townsend. The chief had decided that his wife and Carmelita should stay at home. His sons were to join us later by the overland trail. We made good time downstream. The trip which had taken three days ascending was completed by nine that night. The rest of our party had reached camp several hours ahead of us. Lieutenant Townsend had made arrangements for the housing, or rather tenting, of our Cuna guests.

I was ready to make final plans to break up Camp Townsend and start on the "great push" up the Chucunaque. Neither Mata nor the Paya chief would offer us canoemen for the trip. Both said that any of their people who went with us would be promptly killed by the upper Chucunaque Tules. I had already learned from Chief Avellino that we could not count on Chocois. I realized clearly that green negroes from Panama City and the Canal Zone would be hopeless. So it appeared that my only course was to recruit Darien negroes from Yavisa and the negro settlements along the Upper Tuyra.

Late that afternoon we were startled by the approach of a dignified self-assured stranger, clearly a Tacarcuna Cuna, from the overland trail back of camp previously used by Chief Mata and his followers. This lone Indian came forward fear-

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lessly, spoke in his native language to the two Cuna chiefs, and then offered his hand to me, saying in Spanish, "I am Chief Bibia of the Capeti Cunas." He was Chief Mata's brother-in-law, son of the former christianized Capeti chief who had forbidden his daughter to marry Chief Mata.

Chief Bibia stated that there was a great deal of sickness among the Capeti Cunas, and he wanted me to visit them and cure them. I told him I had no time at present, but would give him a supply of medicines to take back to his people. I suggested that he bring his family down to Camp Townsend. His village was much closer to us than Pucro.

That night I entertained all three Tacarcuna chiefs at our dinner table. The Paya chief turned out to be a persistent beggar, always asking for valuable presents. Chief Mata never importuned for gifts, and so got most of them. Chief Bibia, warmed by our hospitality, asked for a shotgun, dynamite, and numerous other gifts, but I told him when he brought his family and people to visit us, then I would give him the same things I had given the rest.

Deliberately I turned the conversation to our proposed trip up the Chucunaque. Bibia seemed to know most of that territory. He visited the Cunas Bravos on the Sucubti, an upper tributary of the Chucunaque, once a year and the Cunas Bravos often came to visit him on the Capeti. Whatever the truth of these personal visits, he did give us far more information about the upper Chucunaque than I had been able to get from any one else up to that time, and his information later proved to be fairly reliable.

Bibia said that from near Yavisa up to the Sucubti on the upper Chucunaque there were no permanent Indian settlements. On the Sucubti, one day's journey up from its junction with the Chucunaque, was the first village of Cunas Bravos who spoke the same language as his own Capeti Cunas. Two

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hours farther up the Sucubti was a second larger Cunas Bravos village. The Cunas Bravos people were not a bad people, but they had been so badly treated by the Spaniards in the early days that they had moved up to the Sucubti River and now did not allow any strangers to enter their territory. However, he said that while they would frighten away or kill small parties of intruders, he did not think they would attack our large party, particularly if they knew we were not looking for gold or land.

But, he said, we must not attempt to go farther up than the Sucubti; that in the next valley above, the Morti, were a very bad people. These Morti Indians were not true Cunas but were a tribe of San Blas Indians who had come over the high mountains from the Caribbean coast and settled in the high inland Morti Valley. They spoke a language something like that of the Cunas, but different, so it was hard to talk to them. The Cunas of the Sucubti were "Bravos," that is, fierce and brave. The Morti people were "Brujos," which in Spanish means "witches." He was sure we would never be able to pass beyond the "Morti Brujos," but if by any chance we did get by them, we would encounter the "Magic Wallas" of the upper Chucunaque.

These "Magic Wallas," said Chief Bibia, were a separate race entirely. They were very strong, powerful men, white with yellow hair. Their language was different from that of either the Cunas or the San Blas or the Chocoi. They possessed "magic powers." They could turn a rifle bullet away from a distance of ten feet. They could bring great floods and earthquakes. And they could see what people were doing and thinking from a long way off.

I asked him to describe the Magic Wallas and his description fitted exactly the three white girls I had seen at Yavisa. I said I wanted to find them. He said I would never see them



Group of White Indians at Aligandi, San Blas Coast

CHIEF BIBIA

again. They had all gone up to the very head of the Chucunaque. All the armies in the world could not go into the Walla country. The Wallas were not normal men, but were "Spirit Men" who knew all kinds of magic and could not be conquered or killed. I told him I had stronger magic than that of the "Magic Wallas." He only shook his head.

Chief Bibia said all this before Mata and the Paya chief, who sat silent. I asked Mata bluntly if what Bibia said was true. Mata said he believed so. I then asked Mata if Chief Bibia could go up to the Cunas Bravos at Sucubti. He said he thought he could. So I told Chief Bibia that if he would guide us to the Cunas Bravos at Sucubti and help us make friends with them, I would give him my own shotgun, a victrola, and many other valuable presents. Bibia said he would think about it, and if he decided that he could take us up to the Sucubti he would come back in about ten days. But in any case he could supply us no other Indians, as he alone could go into the Cunas Bravos' territory. This was the best I could make him promise, and it wasn't very good. But at any rate, my general plan was succeeding. The news of our harmlessness and good intentions was spreading from tribe to tribe. I felt there was a good chance that it had already spread up the Chucunaque to the mysterious tribes enumerated by Bibia.

Our fiesta that night was a rather solemn, joyless, womanless affair, but we went through with it as I had promised. The three Cuna chiefs sat with me and smoked. I tried to bring about a friendly feeling between them without much success. Their differences were too deep seated to be easily adjusted. We had a display of fireworks and played the victrola. But I could not break down the chiefs' formal reserve.

Early next morning Mata and the Paya chief departed down the Chucunaque by canoe. Chief Bibia left by the over-

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land trail. From then on my attention was directed primarily to making final preparation for the "great push."

Soon after the Cunas had left, Chief Avellino and his Chocois swarmed back to camp. I then heard in detail the reports of the scientists, Baer, Breder and Brin, who had stayed with him. First, Baer reported that he had made anthropological measurements of about a hundred Chocois. Their "cephalic index," or proportion of breadth to length of head, averaged about 0.75 which placed them just midway between "long-headed" and "round-headed" people.* Also Baer reported that a great many of the Chocoi children had decidedly light brown hair, some all over the head and some in patches, which became dark as the children grew older.

Breder, the very intellectual and orthodox scientist, had some even more unusual things to report. Besides finding a new species of small white frog, which he considered more important than my white Indians, he had had some very unscientific experiences with Avellino. Every day he went alone up small creeks towards the foothills, collecting specimens of frogs, lizards, small fish, snakes, etc. These creeks were narrow rock lined streams. The bordering jungle was very dense, and as it was near the end of the dry season, the ground was strewn with fallen leaves. He took special care to see if he was followed.

But each night Avellino, who remained at home with

*I refer any interested readers to the "American Journal of Physical Anthropology," vol. IX, no. 1, edited by Dr. Ales Hrdlicka, Curator of Anthropology of the Smithsonian Institution at Washington, D. C. In this publication, which also includes later anthropological measurements by Prof. Baer of the Cuna Indians, I quote Dr. Hrdlicka as follows: "Much to our surprise, the two tribes are shown to belong to two separate types of Indians. But even more interesting and important, are the facts that the type of . . . the Chocos (Chocois), nears that of the Nahua (of Mexico), while that of . . . the Cunas is evidently very close on one hand to that of the Mayas of Yucatan, and on the other to that of the Yungas who extended for a great distance along the western coast of South America, to below Nasca (Peru)."

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Baer, would laughingly relate to Breder almost every movement he had made during the day. How he had overturned a flat rock at the end of a log and under it found three golden frogs with black spots; where he had seen a snake of a certain type and color. Where he had netted some odd fish, etc., etc. This went on day after day. Breder would go alone for miles on these collecting trips. Avellino would stay at home and tell him every night what he had done during the day. Breder could only conclude "that the old boy has got the German secret-service beaten to death."

One midnight, to cap the climax, Avellino awakened all three scientists to tell them that a Chocoi woman, the wife of the hunter he had previously sent down to Camp Townsend, had just given birth to a baby boy. At Camp Townsend, seven hours distance for an Indian in the day time, that woman *had* delivered a baby boy at precisely the time stated by Avellino! These are facts. None of us have ever had a rational explanation for them.

While I was hearing these reports Avellino appeared suddenly with the startling news that a war-party of fourteen Cunas Bravos Indians was camped at the mouth of the Tuquesa River, a tributary of the Chucunaque about twenty miles above Yavisa. He said he could "see" them, as he had "seen" Breder looking for his frogs and fish. They were waiting to attack us at a point where the channel swung over to the bank and the high grass offered good cover.

So earnest and positive was Avellino that I immediately decided to investigate. The Tuquesa was considered Chocoi territory. The "dead line" of the Tules was at the Membrillo River, considerably farther upstream. Avellino was quite indignant about this invasion, saying that it was the first time in his memory that a war-party of the Cunas Bravos had come so far down into Chocoi territory. Later that afternoon the

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Chinese agent now at Yavisa reported that the night before a canoe load of Cunas Bravos had appeared at Yavisa. Two of them had come into his shop. They were evidently spying on our camp.

I needed trained canoemen to take my party up the Chucunaque. Who more suitable than these Cunas Bravos if I could only make friends with them? I suggested it to Avellino. He did not think they would become friends. They were a "war-party." But he said that, since they were in his territory, he would give me men to go up there, provided I would not go above the Membrillo, and provided I would take hard-wood shields to protect the men. The Cunas Bravos, he said, had two old shotguns secured from traders on the San Blas Coast but no rifles. So hard-wood shields would be protection enough. I told him to get his men, prepare some shields, and we would leave tomorrow.

Early the next morning our "flying squadron" started up the Chucunaque in two long dugout canoes with outboard motors and several Chocoi canoe-men supplied by Avellino. Both my motors had exhaust mufflers which made them almost noiseless at a distance of fifty yards.

By mid-afternoon our tense and excited Chocois said we were approaching the mouth of the Tuquesa. We rounded a bend, keeping close to the east bank, and there, sitting in front of a high stand of grass, were fourteen strange Cuna Indians, just as Avellino had "seen" them. They were evidently taken wholly by surprise. They jumped in their canoes, paddled across the river, here one hundred yards wide, and stopped to observe us.

I stood up in my canoe, waved to the Cunas and tried to indicate that we wanted to be friends. But when we started to approach them slowly, they dug their paddles furiously into the water and dashed up-stream. The water just above the

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Tuquesa became too shallow for our outboard motors. We took to our paddles but lost distance rapidly, and gave up the chase. Those Cunas Bravos were not yet ready to be friends. We could not capture them in their native element. I was to learn later that the only solution was to let them capture us first.

During the excitement of the chase, one of our shotguns went off accidentally, narrowly missing Benton and sending two buckshot through the calf of a Chocoi's leg. It was not a dangerous wound, but a bad, bungling piece of business. The Cunas Bravos must have thought the shot was intended for them, though they were far out of range.

I sent Benton and the wounded Chocoi back to Camp Townsend in one canoe. The rest of us camped for the night at the mouth of the Tuquesa, hoping the Cunas Bravos might come back, but they did not. Next day we returned to Camp Townsend, disgusted with our bungling failure. We had only made bad matters worse. The Cunas Bravos were definitely alarmed.

CHAPTER XIX

FINAL PREPARATIONS

*

MY job now was to get native Darien negroes to man the large cavalcade of canoes I would need when our whole party, with full equipment, would start up on the "great push." We whites alone, I knew, could not stand the physical work of forcing the heavy canoes up to the ultimate headwaters of the Chucunaque and still retain the vitality we would need for other matters.

Next day I sent Lieutenant Townsend back to Panama City in the *Marguerite* for supplies. Just before he left, Chief Avellino came to me with a very beautiful young Chocoi girl. It appeared that the Panamanian captain, whom I did not like and whose name I have never mentioned in this book, had told the Yavisa negroes he was not going up the Chucunaque only to be killed by several thousand war-like Indians. He was going back to Panama when we broke camp and had been trying to persuade the Indian girl to go with him. He had not yet harmed her, but Avellino was indignant. I satisfied myself that the story was true and told the captain to pack his personal belongings and return to Panama with Lieutenant Townsend.

Now, with our start on the "great push" definitely imminent, I set about furiously to find and recruit an efficient crew. For the next two weeks the "flying squadron" was in

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constant motion. I will not weary the reader with the details. They were important only in their conclusion.

We combined a search for competent negroes with a certain amount of exploration. We ascended the Pirri and Tucuti Rivers, both tributaries of the Lower Tuyra, both populated by negroes near their lower courses and by Chocoi Indians in their upper courses. We discovered a large, unknown branch of the Tucuti, known to the Indians as the "Sabalo." We chased phantom rumors of white Indians far to the south. We heard tales of strange tree-dwelling Indians over the border in the Atrato River valley, and encountered a fugitive American criminal living with the negroes at Tucuti. Finally we recruited the toughest bunch of negro renegades I have ever seen and brought them back to Camp Townsend under promise of high pay.

The leader of these outlaws was an old negro named Barbino who had murdered a gold prospector several years ago and was under sentence of death in Panama City. "Boca de Cupa" was another powerful, scarred ruffian. I herded them back to camp, gave them liberal advance payments, and proceeded to fatten them up for the slaughter before they knew what it was all about.

With my negro crew assured, my next consideration was about the white members of our party. It had long been decided that Dr. H. L. Fairchild, representing the University of Rochester, would not go with us on the "great push" on account of his advanced age. Major Malsbury had completed his geodetic observations and wanted to return to his family on the Canal Zone. I had already decided that Corporal Murphy of the U. S. Signal Corps, with his useless wireless equipment, should go back too. That "portable" wireless outfit, consisting of telescopic steel mast, instruments and twenty wet

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batteries weighed all told over a ton, and would have required twenty-five or thirty men to transport it overland.

The military men, and Breder and Brin among the scientists, were in fine physical shape. Charlton, the photographer, and Benton, the writer, were in fair condition. Major Johnson, the ex-army naturalist, seemed strong and healthy. Only Baer of the Smithsonian appeared unfit physically. Baer, as I have already stated, was a short man, under five feet six inches, who weighed at least two hundred and twenty-five pounds. When I asked the Smithsonian Institution in Washington to send an anthropologist with us, they selected Dr. Baer because he was the trained assistant to Dr. Hrdlicka. When I expressed doubt as to whether Baer could stand the physical hardships, I was told if I did not take Baer I would take no one. I particularly wanted the Smithsonian represented, so I acquiesced in the choice of Prof. Baer, though with my "tongue in my cheek." I thought that the preliminary preparation at the camp near Yavisa would put him in reasonable physical condition.

But Baer's type of work, consisting of anthropological measurements of Indians who readily came to him required no physical training or "reducing" whatever. I spoke very frankly to Baer, stating that I did not feel justified in taking him on the very difficult trip up the Chucunaque. Lieutenant Townsend agreed with me. But Baer was broken-hearted. He stated this was the greatest scientific opportunity of his life. If he was the first accredited anthropologist to study the white Indians, it would be the making of his career. But if I sent him back just on the eve of our departure into the unexplored area it would be a permanent blot on his record.

Finally I told him I would put him to a test. We still had a couple of weeks before the start of the "great push." I decided to send Baer, Brin and Major Johnson with some of

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our newly acquired negroes up to Chief Mata's home on the Pucro. They were then to make the overland trip to Paya and back. If Baer could stand that trip and still wanted to go up the Chucunaque I would take him. So, with a few more presents for Chief Mata and Carmelita, I sent them on their way.

Then, to break in my remaining negroes, I started a series of short explorations up the lower tributaries of the Chucunaque. We ascended successively the Rio Tupisa and the Rio Ucunati, both of which come down from the San Blas mountains to the east. At the head of canoe-navigation on the Tupisa we found a scattering settlement of friendly Chocoi Indians, and another beautiful big "round-house" such as we had seen at the mouth of the Yape River on the lower Tuyra. On the Ucunati River we found no inhabitants.

About half way up the Tupisa branch I noticed an oddly shaped hill on the south bank. It was perhaps seventy feet high with a nondescript shack on its summit. I climbed up a narrow trail through low underbrush to investigate. The shack was occupied by a powerful negro, well over six feet tall, who had a Chocoi Indian wife. Apparently they were ostracized by both the negroes and the Chocois. He was a fine, straightforward, courteous individual. His home was clean and his Indian wife apparently industrious and contented.

As soon as I reached the top of the hill, I saw that it was unquestionably artificial or artificially altered. The top was perfectly level. The edges were straight lines to uniform slopes. There were no large trees on the summit or slopes, but the thick underbrush prevented a good examination. I told the negro that if he would clear the whole hillside, top and slopes, so that I could examine it, I would pay him twenty dollars, half in advance, and would come back in a week or ten days

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to see the result. He was delighted, and said he would get help and have the whole job done in a few days.

About ten days after their departure, Baer, Brin, Johnson and the negroes returned from their trip to the Pucro and Paya. Baer looked all in, and the others were very uncommunicative as to how he had stood the trip. But he had made the overland trip from Pucro to Paya. I did not learn until long afterwards that Baer had become so exhausted on the land hike that it took him over twelve hours to make it. Chief Mata's Indians had to take him back to Pucro by canoe.

But Baer was still all enthusiasm and more determined than ever to go up the Chucunaque. He had seen the first white Indian encountered by our party on this trip—or at least he thought he had, but was not quite certain. It appeared that at Pucro he had taken complete anthropological measurements of the Indians. The Paya Indians would not submit to anthropological measurements, but one of Chief Mata's men, knowing our party's interest in the white Indians, took Baer aside and led him to a small house in the jungle beyond the edge of the village of Paya.

As he entered, a frightened young girl, the only occupant, rushed out of the house into the jungle. She wore only a loin-cloth. Her entire body and long hair had been dyed a very dark blue, almost black, but her eyes were decidedly blue, and the skin around the eyes and on other parts of the body where it had escaped the dyeing process was distinctly white.

The arrival of a number of angry Paya Indians prevented Baer from making any further search for the girl, and he was not permitted to return to that isolated house. I have no doubt the girl was a young white Indian. We later learned that it is a fixed Tule custom that when a young girl approaches her first menstrual period, she is painted with a dark blue vegetable dye and is segregated in a small outlying house for a week or

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ten days. Her food is brought to her, but she is not allowed contact with other people. Perhaps the Paca River white Indians whom Chief Mata said had gone to Paya, had had with them a young girl at this stage of physiological development and had left her with the Pucro Indians to pass the fixed ceremonial period which marks the transition from childhood to womanhood. Anyway, the sight of her had increased Baer's desire to continue with us. And as he had apparently passed the test I had set, I finally consented.

Lieutenant Townsend was due back any day from Panama City with new supplies, and we were separating the equipment and stores to be taken up the Chucunaque from those to be sent back to Panama. Chief Mata had come back with Baer's party and I gave him everything I did not want to save.

Early one of those last mornings, I took Breder and Brin and two negro canoemen and returned to the strange hill on the Tupisa River. The negro had done a good job of clearing the top and slopes. Immediately we realized we had found something important. That hill was probably originally natural, the terminus of a low ridge coming down from the southeast, but had been greatly modified by man. It had been kept cleared down to quite recent times, as there were no trees on it over a few inches in diameter, perhaps ten or fifteen years old.

The hill was somewhat in the shape of a flat horseshoe, with its concave side toward the northeast, facing a low plain of about twenty acres, along the river. This plain had also been recently cleared, as its low growing vegetation contrasted sharply with the surrounding high jungle growth. The top of the hill was perfectly level, about one hundred feet long, and seventy feet wide. The northeast side was concave and formed a large symmetrical amphitheater facing the plain, with five

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uniform terraces ten feet wide, separated by 45° slopes ten feet high. Every detail was mathematically exact and even.

The rear of the mound was also regular and artificial, but was built on a different plan. Cut into the exact center of the southwest side was a rectangular depression with 45° slopes meeting at the level of the bottom of the mound. The side toward the river was also uniform and even, but was not indented. The side away from the river was joined by a narrow ridge to the line of natural hills on the end of which the mound had been constructed.

The general effect of the hill was a truncated pyramid, a design common to most of the ancient cultures of Central and South America. The terraced amphitheater was unusual, but its purpose was apparent. The rectangular depression in the rear was a mystery. I have never seen or heard of such a feature anywhere else. We later found a large artificial pyramid with a concave face on the San Blas coast, but it did not have the rear depression.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about this Tupisa pyramid was its newness. The almost perfect condition of the surfaces and the smallness of the trees upon it, indicated clearly that it had not been abandoned many years. While I was exploring and drawing a rough map, Breder and Brin had been digging a trench. The soil was hard-packed clay with no trace of humus. They found several fragments of black pottery—enough to justify a thorough investigation by archeologists. The negro said he had lived there about a year, and had found a great deal more of the pottery while clearing a space for his house.

But we had no time for the tedious processes of careful archeology, so went back to camp, assured of one more proof that Darien had been the site of a high and unknown culture.

The next day Townsend arrived from Panama City in the

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Coco Solo, which this time came clear up to camp. He brought with him a new Panamanian captain, to replace the one I had sent home. Our final preparations for the "great push" up the Chucunaque were complete. The last night at dismantled Camp Townsend was a celebration and a farewell. Dr. Fairchild, Major Malsbury, Corporal Murphy and our Panamanian negroes except Arthur and Dirty Dick were all slated to go back on the *Coco Solo*. Much of our heavy equipment, and all of our ethnological collections from the Chocois and Tacarcuna Cunas, were on the boat. They are now on exhibition in the National Museum in Washington.

Then, when I thought everything was ready for our start, Barbino and the other Darien negroes came in a delegation to announce that they had changed their minds and had decided not to go up the Chucunaque, where the Indians were very bad and "brujos." I had already paid them a month's wages in advance, which they had either spent at Yavisa or sent back to their jungle families. I tried to argue with them a while, then told them that I had the record of each of them. They were all eligible for jail in Panama, and their leader Barbino was wanted for murder. I had military powers granted especially by President Porras. They were all under arrest, and if any one of them attempted to escape he would be shot on the spot. But if they came with me, I would see that all legal charges against them were dropped. After this lecture I put them under armed guard for the rest of the night.

That evening I carefully repeated my charges to all the white men who were to accompany me. We were going up to the headwaters of the Chucunaque and either cut over and descend the Bayano or cross over to the San Blas coast on the Caribbean. But come what may, we would not return down the Chucunaque. If any man got sick, we would keep him with us and give him the best medical care possible, but we

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would not turn back for sickness, as otherwise there was no use starting. Some of us were sure to get sick. I would discuss all matters of policy with the other members of the party, but final decisions were to rest with me. If any man was not willing to go ahead under these conditions, he could return to Panama City on the *Coco Solo*.

All agreed to the terms enthusiastically. I particularly remember Brin's declaration that he would be the first man to enter every Indian stronghold and hoped that we Americans would follow him. The reader will later understand why I make these conditions so plain.

CHAPTER XX

OFF ON THE "GREAT PUSH"

*

ON March 29th, at 11 A.M. we finally got started on the "Great Push." There were twenty-four in the party, all told—eleven white men including the new Panamanian captain whom Townsend had brought back on the *Coco Solo*, eleven negro boatmen, and two negro cooks. We had six dug-out canoes of varying size. Two were enormous—fully sixty feet long with a four-foot beam. Two were somewhat smaller, and two were comparatively small. Each of the small canoes was equipped with an Elto outboard motor and towed two of the others on the open stretches. The negro boatmen helped with paddles.

I took command of the leading squadron of three canoes, and gave Townsend command of the second. The day's run was accomplished without a hitch. Brin complained of a slight fever, but would not let Baer, our doctor, examine him. We averaged about five miles an hour on the deep and smooth river. And at nightfall we made camp on a gravel bar at the mouth of the Canglon, a tributary entering from the west. The sky was clear, so we did not put up any tent-flies, but slept in the open air under mosquito-bars.

We all felt very well pleased with the way things were going. The white men were enthusiastic. Brin's fever had subsided, and he joined Benton, Townsend, and Rosebaum

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in a game of bridge until late that night. Even the renegade jungle negroes seemed pleased with the easy efficiency of that first day and with their excellent supper. They announced that they would follow me "into Hell."

We divided the night into three watches—9 to 12, 12 to 3, and 3 to 6. The party was divided into eleven pairs, consisting of a white man and a negro. The cooks were excused from this duty. So every one had two or three successive nights of uninterrupted sleep. There were no mosquitoes that first night, and only a few gnats. Nothing happened to disturb us, and by 7:30 the next morning we had breakfasted, broken camp, and were on our way again.

The second day we encountered numerous shallows and rapids which slowed us up considerably, but we ran ahead without stopping for lunch and covered twenty-five miles by water. During the day we saw many big howler monkeys and a great many crocodiles. I shot an iguana out of the top of a tall tree, providing fresh meat for supper. At 3:30 we camped on a shelving bank.

This night the sky was cloudy, so we put up three officers' tent-flies for the whites, a small fly for the cooks, and a large one for the negroes. While we were making camp, a band of howler monkeys let out an awful uproar from a big tree just above us. We shot two with our rifles, and Baer and Johnson skinned them well below camp.

One of Baer's most unpleasant jobs, required by Dr. Hrdlicka, was to prepare an anthropological chart of all the monkeys we could collect. He weighed their bodies, brains, and other organs, calculating their relation to the total weight. Such charts are supposed to have great scientific value.

Breder seined some interesting small fish. We all had a swim in the cool water of the river, and then a fine supper of fried iguana, rice, peas, canned "bully beef" and alligator pears.

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We had passed a tree on the river bank loaded with the largest pears I have seen before or since.

The Panamanian captain had the first watch, Rosebaum the second, and I the third. As I came on duty at 3 A.M., Charlton, who had been awake, said that he heard Indian whistling signals some distance up river. I listened. Then I called Breder and Johnson.

After a few moments we heard a series of short, whistling notes which sounded as if some one were counting. First came eight quick, regular notes. Then a pause. Then nine and another pause. Then four and a pause. Then five, and so on. They might have come from some animal, but none of us had ever heard of any bird, frog, or insect which produced such notes. They sounded more like a flute or an Indian Pan Pipe. Their regularity and their oddly spaced pauses suggested some sort of telegraphic code. We knew, of course, that sooner or later we would be under constant observation from the up-river Indians. Perhaps this was the first sign of their presence.

But nothing else happened that night. The rest of the men went back to bed. I sat up with my negro partner until day-break, when a big howler monkey let out a tremendous roar across the river, awoke the entire camp, and sent numerous crocodiles scurrying into the water.

This day we made another thirty miles by water, but covered only twelve miles in a straight line because of the loops and curves of the river. During the afternoon we encountered many great logs and trees which had fallen clear across the stream. It was almost impossible to carry our heaviest canoes around such obstacles. In one place we dug a canal in the bank around a log end. Then we came to a huge hardwood log, half under water with both ends buried deep in the bank. There was nothing to do but chop a passage through it, which took us an hour and a half.

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At this obstruction Brin left us. He had complained of feeling sick all day. I had fixed him a comfortable bed in the bow of my lead canoe and did not think his condition very serious. He had no fever but was tired and nervous. When we encountered the big tree, Brin announced that he thought it very inadvisable for him to continue further and insisted on returning to Yavisa.

This was a quite disciplinary problem for me to solve. His leaving would be contrary to the agreement we had all made before we started. But Brin was the personal representative of President Porras, and I did not feel in a position to refuse him. I gave him my own lead canoe, loaded into it all his personal effects and food for three days, and sent him down river with two negro boatmen, whom I could ill spare. No one else wanted to return with him. It was months later that we learned that Brin had died of pernicious malaria just after reaching Panama.

During that day we passed a dead tapir in the water. Townsend got a shot at a live one on the bank and missed it. We saw many large black ducks (*Patos Reales*), monkeys, iguanas, and a whole colony of what looked like big black tom-cats in a tree near the river. This would have been wonderful hunting country if we had had time for such amusement. But we had to push on steadily, and the noise of our outboard motors, now unmuffled for increased power, prevented our approaching close to any game.

That night we camped on a gravel bar at the mouth of a stream which Barbino called the "Metati." This fugitive negro murderer had names for all the streams in the vicinity. Some time ago he had been hard pressed by the Panamanian Colonial Police who came to Yavisa in search of him and had taken refuge up the Chucunaque. He claimed to have been all the way up to the Sucubti and to have stolen food from the out-

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lying Indian plantations there. In spite of Barbino's record and his attempted mutiny at Camp Townsend, I was beginning to have a good deal of regard for him. He was the best bad-water canoeman I have ever known, and in emergencies his brain worked like lightning. He later developed into my most loyal follower and was one of the four negroes to get back to the Canal Zone with me.

The next day, about 3 P.M., we reached the mouth of the Membrillo River, the famous deadline of the Tule tribes, which I had heard about as soon as I got to Yavisa, and beyond which no one was supposed to pass. There were no Indians in sight, and no signs of them on the banks. We camped peacefully on a bar below the mouth of the Membrillo. I intended to cross the dead-line in the morning.

After the tents were pitched, Breder and Rosebaum seined in the mouth of the Membrillo and caught what Breder described as a new species of fish, which he christened with two Latin words and a final "*Membrilliensis*." He was so pleased with this discovery that he made a short exploration trip up the near bank of the Membrillo.

In a few minutes he returned in a great hurry. About three hundred yards from the Chucunaque he had heard a peculiar chopping sound from around a bend ahead. Proceeding cautiously, he saw an Indian on the far bank near the water's edge hitting the trunk of a tree with a machete. Apparently he was not trying to cut down the tree. The machete strokes were arranged in regular series like the whistling notes we had heard a few nights before. Evidently the Indian was trying to send a code signal.

Breder listened. Presently he heard a similar, answering sound from far up the river. Like many scientists, Breder had absolutely no sense of personal fear. He called out to the Indian, who took one startled look at him and disappeared

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into the jungle. This left no doubt in our minds that we were under constant observation by the Indians. But there was no trouble at all that night.

The next morning at 7:20 we crossed the famous deadline. There was no opposition from the Indians. In fact, no Indians showed themselves. But we had plenty of other trouble. For several hours the going was terrific—more like chopping a road through the woods than canoeing up a river. Innumerable logs and whole trees blocked the stream, which was very shallow. We went over and under and through them. One blockade held us up for an hour and a half. We reached the mouth of the Chiati shortly after noon, having covered only a little more than five miles in five hours. Again we ran into log-jams which held us up for two hours. Then we entered the most beautiful stretch of the Chucunaque which we had yet seen.

The river widened. It was deep, free of logs, and still. The banks were grassy to the water's edge, and the trees in the background were enormous. At 3:15 I picked a beautiful little camp ground—a ledge of shale about forty feet wide, two hundred feet long, and two feet above the water level. Just in front was a short, swift rapid over smooth shale, with a miniature horseshoe falls ideal for bathing.

I have said that no Indians showed themselves on this first stretch across the deadline. But we saw many signs of them. Just before we left Yavisa, a Cuna sent by Chief Bibia had warned us that the Cunas Bravos had cut a trail from their villages to the mouth of the Chiati and were waiting for us there. We were prepared for an attack if it should come, but it did not.

Shortly after we crossed the deadline, however, we found fresh tracks on the bank. Then a little later on we came to a sand bar in which were stuck a number of turkey feathers in odd designs, which Barbino said were "magic signs." Later

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we found a recent camp fire on the shore beside which lay two beautifully made five foot arrows with reed shafts and hardwood points. Perhaps the Indians had been surprised and dropped them there when they left in a hurry. But our large party, making no attempt at silence, could be heard a long way off. The arrows were probably intended as a warning.

Whatever the Indians might be planning to do, they were certainly watching us. So that evening on the Chiati we gave them an exhibition. Benton fired a volley from his Luger automatic, and I touched off an army signal rocket—the kind which goes up several hundred feet and explodes, leaving floating green lights which last for some time. That was to offset the Indians' magic.

Before we went to bed, Breder used his seine in the river and caught a new fish—certainly a new species and possibly a new genus, a distinction very important to him. He and Baer were much excited. They were covering ground which had never been penetrated by scientists. They were looking forward to crossing the Sucubti and entering absolutely unknown country.

Nothing unusual happened that night. We got going early and had a good run for two or three miles. Then we encountered a succession of log-jams, which we had to chop through with axes. Finally we ran against an enormous log too high to lift our canoes over and too low in the water to chop. It held us up for an hour and a half until I finally blew it up with two sticks of dynamite.

A little farther on we passed an Indian camp with a whole row of turkey feathers stuck upright in a straight line in the sand. There were twenty-one of them—one for each member of our party. Still we saw no Indians and made camp after covering only about eight miles. I got my rockets and flares ready to set off if we had visitors, but none appeared. We were

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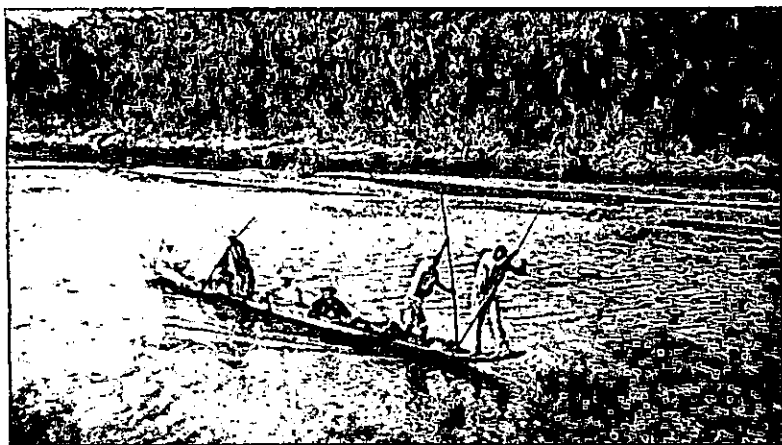
beginning to doubt the stories about the "thousands of hostile Indians" up the Chucunaque. There were certainly none below the Sucubti.

The next day was even worse. After we had gone two miles from camp, we hit the worst succession of jams we had yet encountered. One log took three sticks of dynamite before we could pass. Another held us up for an hour and a half. My dynamite was running low. What I should have brought was a lumberman's cross-cut saw. That day we made only four miles. We found turkey feathers stuck in the sand, but saw no Indians.

The next day was the same story. We covered only two and a half miles, hacking our way with axes and saving the dynamite for special occasions. I had only five sticks left. At 1:30 we made camp in front of a jam which looked as if it would take the rest of the day to deal with—two huge logs on top of one another clear across the river. I scouted ahead with Rosebaum in our smallest canoe, finding water conditions somewhat better for a mile and a half. We shot a "perdis" or wild chicken and four large curassows. We saw Indian tracks, but no Indians.

Day by day the river seemed to get worse. It was narrowing rapidly, so that more trees extended entirely across. We hacked our way two miles on the next day through minor jams and then were brought up short by a five-foot log of solid cocobolo, hard as iron and without a weak spot in it. It was imbedded deep in each bank. Two and a half feet of its thickness were above water-level, and one and one half feet below.

First we cut two deep "V"s five feet apart and down to six inches below the water. I laid a stick of dynamite in one of them, packing it tight with heavy clay, and hoping that it would shear off the chunk between the cuts. But it merely blew the clay out and didn't damage the log a particle. Next



Up the Chucunaque



Hard Going on the Chucunaque

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I placed two sticks of dynamite under water, securing them by strings. This time part of the chunk blew off, and let us pass through after another hour's chopping. Later we encountered several smaller jams which would have looked very formidable a few days ago, but now they seemed like child's play.

At the last barricade I had the men push the smallest canoe over and with Pabon and the Panamanian captain scouted on for half a mile. We should have reached the mouth of the Sucubti according to all our calculations, but did not. The chart made by Captain Selfridge in 1871 proved utterly worthless. Our unofficial opinion was that the "Magic Wallas" were moving the river further upstream every day.

Finally we ran against a tremendous log-jam which looked as if it would take a full day to pass. So I returned, picked out the best available site, and pitched camp there. The big canoes arrived about 4 P.M.

When we had finished supper, I was debating the necessity of maintaining guards that night. The men were fearfully tired. I was practically certain that no Indians in force could approach us by water in the darkness through those logs and snags without making a terrible racket. As for the land side, we were safe there. No one, not even an Indian, could walk quietly through the dry leaves on the ground. A little opossum had come down to the bank a few minutes ago, and he sounded like an army. We all turned out in force, thinking it was at least a *tigre* or a tapir.

I had almost decided that a night guard was unnecessary when the Panamanian captain came to me with news which changed the situation. He had just overheard some of the negroes planning to steal a canoe and food and leave for Yavisa in the darkness. I called all hands and questioned the negroes. Three of the laziest and most stubborn admitted the story. They said they certainly did not intend to go beyond

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the mouth of the Sucubti. And besides they didn't like the way I swore at them!

I read them the riot act. I told them that they had contracted to go as far as the villages of the Cunas Bravos. If they didn't like being sworn at, they should do their share of the work. If any man quit or deserted, or attempted to steal a boat or food, I would shoot him on the spot. When it suited my convenience, I would send them back to Yavisa, but not before. They had realized that they would encounter Indians when they agreed to come. But the Indians were not nearly as dangerous as I was. If they were sensible and did what I told them, they'd be all right. But if they mutinied, I would shoot them all.

This sobered them down. They said they would go to the villages on the Sucubti, but on no account would they go on up into the Walla country. I told them I had no intention of taking them there. Only real men, not children, could go with me to the Walla country. This brought peals of laughter from the loyal negroes, who said they would go to hell with me.

That ended the mutiny, but it also demonstrated the necessity of maintaining a white night guard, not so much against the Indians as to prevent our own blacks from deserting in stolen canoes. So Rosebaum, Benton and I kept guard that night.

At 1:30 there was a short brisk shower. This was good news, for it showed that the rainy season was about to arrive. We wanted the river to swell and let us continue by the water route. During the night we heard again the strange counting whistles in the jungle, showing that the Indians were watching our progress closely.

Just before daybreak the leader of the rebellious negroes came up to me and said "Good morning, Mr. Marsh" in a very respectful tone. I accepted this conciliatory gesture with a grudging nod. After breakfast I loaded the seven strongest negroes into canoes and went at the log jam, telling them that

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the first man to quit would be shot on the spot. The effect was magical. In exactly one hour they had torn, clawed, and hacked a good passage through it.

Then I sent Townsend, Rosebaum, the Panamanian captain, and two of the blacks ahead with instructions to find the Sucubti, drive a stake into it, tie it to a tree and prevent the "Magic Wallas" from moving it further upstream. While they were gone, we attacked the rest of the jams, and by 1:30 had covered three miles.

I was driving the negroes hard, and not one shirked. But about 1:30 my strongest man faltered and dropped his ax. I asked him what was the matter. He said he was faint from hunger. I thought he was shamming and drove them all back to work. Then Arthur, the Black Boss, told me that the men could work harder if they had some breakfast. To my amazement I learned that the cooks had fed them only three crackers apiece for the last three days. This would have been all right when we were traveling with motors, but the last three days had been very hard work, and the men could not be expected to keep at it all day on empty stomachs. We had a big meal at night, but never stopped for lunch.

So I told the negroes they could stop work for the day. And I would see that hereafter they got plenty of rice and meat for breakfast. But they preferred to keep working as long as they could by "spelling" each other.

At 3 o'clock Townsend's advance party returned. They had reached the Sucubti at last—just about two miles above my working gang. They had ascended it for two miles, finding it shallow in spots, but free from jams. At the end of the two miles they had found some outlying banana plantations, indicating that the Indians villages were near. Townsend estimated that it would take two days to clear a passage for our large canoes up to the Sucubti.

CHAPTER XXI
THE SUCUBTI AT LAST

*

THIS was encouraging news. I felt that once we reached the Sucubti, we could get to the villages without much trouble. On the return to "Camp Mutiny" we shot five wild turkeys and a partridge from the overhanging branches without having to leave the canoes. We saw numerous monkeys, and saw eight large black wildcats in one tree. They were about twice the size of an ordinary tom-cat. None of my zoölogical friends has yet been able to identify them.

Just above camp we heard Indians shouting in the jungle. But they did not show themselves, and we had lost practically all of our fear of them. We later learned that they did not believe we could make the passage, and indeed I don't think we could have without dynamite.

The next morning I sent Benton, Townsend, Rosebaum, and Barbino on a land hike to the northeast, leaving Charlton, Johnson, Baer, Pabon, Victor, the weakest negro, and the two cooks to hold down the camp. I wanted to give the white men something to do, as some of them had been getting morbid in the last few days of delay at Camp Mutiny.

Then I started out again with Breder, the Panamanian captain, and the working crew, after seeing that the negroes had an enormous breakfast. I let them have their own way until eleven A.M., but they took things so easily that I felt I'd

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better spruce them up. So I told them that I was going to keep them at work until we got to the Sucubti—even if it took all day and all night. The effect was marked. They went to work in earnest, and by three o'clock we were through.

We left one obstacle to be overcome by strategy. Just below the junction a seven-foot tree lay right across the river, its ends firmly embedded in the bank. The lower edge was about six inches above the water level. So I unloaded the light canoe, submerged it, and ran it under the log. The water here was four feet deep and the banks allowed cargo to be transported around the ends of the log. So I decided that the heavy canoes also could be passed under the log in the same way.

We ascended the Sucubti a little way in the light canoe and found a good camp site not far above the mouth. The river was very shallow and apparently falling rapidly. But it was free of logs and passable. The trip back to Camp Mutiny took two hours through the open passage which had taken so many days to clear.

When we got to camp, we found that the land scouting party had already returned, bringing a fine yearling deer which the cook was already preparing. They had found the forest fairly open and had discovered a large open space covered with tall grass which I could not account for and which they did not sufficiently investigate. But they saw no signs of Indians. Certainly the "seven thousand hostile savages" reported by Captain Selfridge did not exist.

Early the next morning we started on the final stretch of the Chucunaque. That last day was the hardest of all. In spite of the passage cleared by the working crew, there were many obstacles left in the path of the loaded canoes—submerged logs which could not be chopped and over which the heavy dugouts had to be hauled by main force. The whites had to join with the blacks or we would never have got through.

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By noon we reached the large log which we had left untouched the day before. We unloaded the big canoes, filled them with water and ran them under, after carrying the cargo around the ends of the log. This operation took two hours. By three o'clock we reached the junction of the Sucubti, and here another disappointment awaited us. The river had fallen considerably in the night, and was in many places no more than two or three inches deep. Even when we put all the men on a single canoe, we could hardly haul it over the shallows. It was terrific work, but at five o'clock we finally reached the camp site I had found the day before, a gravel bar beside the river. We had attained the ultimate limit of navigation for our big canoes—at least until the rainy season arrived. For further progress we would have to depend on light canoes secured from the local Indians.

It had been a tremendously laborious trip up from Yavisa, but we could congratulate ourselves on reaching our first objective with complete success. All of our party had arrived except Brin. We had lost none of our equipment. And we had come as far, probably farther, than any white man of record.

The history of exploration in this region is extremely vague. Possibly some of the early Spaniards and buccaneers got up as far as the Sucubti. But I have seen no definite proofs of this. Certainly they went no farther. Captain Selfridge in 1871 claimed to have reached the upper headwaters of the Sucubti from the Caribbean coast, when the "7,000 Indians" retreated before his force of 370 marines. But his map, supplied by the U. S. Military Intelligence, proved to be extremely inaccurate. It showed the lower Sucubti flowing northwest to join the Chucunaque, whereas we found its true course was southwest. I rather think the Captain, having decided that the route was utterly impracticable for a canal, had merely guessed at the river's course, put it on his sketch-map, and turned back.

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The other explorers were even less reliable. An employee of the United Fruit Company claimed to have reached the Sucubti from Yavisa a few years back, but the negroes who went with him said he got only as far as the Membrillo. The Sinclair Oil man, Terry, apparently thought he had reached the Sucubti, but his canoemen, who were with me, said he had turned back at the Chiati. Terry made his trip during high water at the end of the rainy season in the cruiser *Marguerite*, which I later chartered. And the *Marguerite* drew too much water to get by the high log jams we had encountered.

So I felt certain that we were the first on the ground. Up the shallow Sucubti lay absolutely unknown country. We no longer feared the "7,000 Indians" reported by Selfridge, but we did not know what we'd find on the following day.

At five o'clock the next morning, while we were getting ready for breakfast, we heard from up-stream two gun-shots in rapid succession. Evidently the original Cunas Bravos with their two old shot-guns were still near by. So after breakfast I took Townsend, the Panamanian captain, and two negroes in the smallest canoe and started up the Sucubti.

After we had been on our way for two hours, the Captain foolishly shot a big fish with his pistol and wasted several minutes trying to retrieve it. After this interval, we pushed on around the next bend. Ahead of us up the river was a small canoe with three Indians, poling like mad. We called to them, but they simply increased their speed. So we chased after them, pressing them pretty hard for half a mile, when they finally abandoned their canoe and took to the jungle. No doubt the Captain's shot had convinced them that we were hostile.

My one desire of course was to make friends with them, but evidently they were more afraid of us than our negroes were of them. So I put a dollar and a half in silver in the abandoned canoe where they could find it on their return and

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continued upstream. It looked as if the Cunas Bravos, besides being few in number, were not very "bravo" either.

At 12:30 we turned back in order to reach camp before dark. On the return trip we noticed many small plantations of bananas, coffee, and cacao, but no houses. We also stopped to examine the abandoned canoe, which was still untouched. It contained a wicker basket, several calabashes of *chicha*, some lumps of crude chocolate, and many of the oil-nuts which the Indians use for candles. We got back to camp about five o'clock.

The next morning I realized that our only hope of making further progress, before the rains raised the water level, was to get the aid of many Indians with small canoes. The scouting trip convinced me that the most practical course was to take a fairly strong party up to the villages in a lightly loaded canoe. Then, if I could get the help of the Indians, I would bring up the rest of the party and the equipment in relays.

So we started off in two canoes, with five whites, six blacks, food for seven days, ammunition, rockets, etc. It made a pretty big load after all, but we found that we made much better progress over the shallows than I had expected. We passed the abandoned canoe with the silver money still untouched, and got beyond the highest point I had reached the day before. Toward evening we made camp on a gravel bar. We were all very tired, for we had dragged the canoes over miles of shallow water, and had walked more than half of the way.

After supper Rosebaum and I rigged up a chute for an army parachute rocket in case any Indians should disturb us in the night. They are supposed to attack suddenly under cover of darkness, but the few we had seen looked much more afraid of us than we were of them. Then we drew lots to see who should stand watch. I drew the 9 to 12 period.

So I sat down in front of the tent-fly, with a lantern hung on the rocket chute, a candle perched on a tent stake, and



*Acla, San Blas Coast, Where Balboa Was Beheaded
and Where Dr. J. L. Baer, Our Scientist, Died*



*Mono, a San Blas Village Captured, Rebuilt and
Dominated by Panamanian Negro Soldiers. This
Village Was Recaptured by the Indians*

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weapons enough to destroy the whole Cuna Bravo tribe close at hand. I was supposed to be watching for an attack, but I couldn't get much thrill out of the possibility. Our rockets, flares, and flashlights I was sure could "out Walla" the "Magic Wallas" themselves.

It was a beautiful night. All sorts of strange sounds came from the jungle. Across the narrow river was a spreading tree which was full of strange little nocturnal animals, seemingly half monkey and half cat. They made an awful rumpus, rustling the branches and throwing sticks into the water. Some large animal tramped heavily in the jungle, perhaps a tapir, "tiger" or deer. Once a pack of howler monkeys let out an angry roar upstream, as if disturbed by something passing under their tree. And once I heard three resounding whacks downstream. I thought it might be Indians, but the negro, "Dirty Dick," who was awake, said it was a crocodile lashing its tail. At midnight I turned in, leaving the Panamanian captain on guard.

The next day was uneventful. We passed many apparently abandoned plantations of bananas, coffee, and cacao. At noon we saw on the bank a very crude shelter with a palm-thatch roof. A few pieces of rude pottery and some calabashes were lying near it. But no canoes, and no people. The place had been wholly abandoned. We made camp after covering about twelve miles.

Nothing happened during the night. We got started again at 8:30. The river was much shallower now, and was obstructed by a succession of little rapids over gravel bars. At one o'clock we passed a branch, probably the Asnati, but continued on the main river. All along the banks were abandoned camps and plantations. Certainly there had been a large population here a few years back. It doesn't take long for the jungle to swallow all signs of cultivation. But there were certainly no villages

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now. At 4 o'clock we came to a fresh clearing, which showed that live Indians were near by. So we pitched camp, set up our rockets, posted guards, and waited for the dawn, convinced that we'd find these elusive people the next day.



CHAPTER XXII

THE "TERRIBLE" CUNAS BRAVOS

*

IN the morning the Captain, Rosebaum, and I took the small canoe with three negroes on a scouting party upstream, intending to return to camp before night. After an hour we saw three wild pigs on a bar. We went ashore to stalk them, but they saw us and escaped. The Captain went a hundred yards up the bank to reconnoiter.

Suddenly I saw a small canoe with three Indians in it put out from the farther bank and start upstream. I shouted, and the Captain ran out from the bank to cut them off. The rest of us hurried to the scene of the capture. The Indians stopped poling. The expression of terror on their faces changed to amazement. And they almost hugged us when they found we were friendly.

One of them could speak a few words of Spanish. He told us that his chief lived a little way upstream. We asked them to take us to him, and they agreed. So I sent the Captain and the three blacks back to Charlton and Benton at camp to tell them to follow us the next morning. I told one of the Indians to go ahead and tell his chief that we were good men, meant no harm, and would pay for everything we took.

We continued upstream for an hour when we came to an empty house. The Indians said this was the highest point which could be reached by canoe without very hard work, but

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that we could take the land trail. I thought it best to wait until the messenger had reached the chief's camp. Presently eight more Indians arrived and told us that we could proceed. I left a note for Benton in the house, telling him that we had taken the land trail. Then Rosebaum and I set out with the ten Indians.

After about an hour's walk we came to a cluster of inhabited houses fifty yards back from the bank. Our escort ordered us to lay our firearms on the ground before going ahead to see the chief. After a moment's hesitation I put down my rifle and shotgun, but retained my pistol and cartridge belt. Rosebaum did the same, and the guards led us around the houses at a distance, probably to keep us from seeing the women.

After a short additional walk we came to another cluster of houses, five or six of them, with roofs but no walls. In a hammock in one of them lay a rather small, oldish, sharp-featured Indian with a wounded and badly infected leg. He looked up at us when we entered and said—in *perfect English*—"How are you, Boys? Glad to see you."

So this was the Chief of the ferocious and savage Cunas Bravos! We were thunderstruck. We asked him where he learned his English, and he answered, "New York." He had worked for twenty years on sailing vessels, had been in New York, California, Hamburg, Paris, and Japan. Eight years before he had returned to his native land and had been Chief of the Sucubti Valley ever since. We learned later that his name was "Salisiman"—which is an "English name," a corruption of "Charlie Seaman."

I explained to him that we were a scientific expedition sponsored by the governments of the United States and Panama. And I showed him my letter from President Porras asking assistance and coöperation. He was not much impressed

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when I translated it to him. But he said he was glad we had arrived.

Then followed a long, involved and rather doubtful tale. He said the Walla and Morti Indians were preparing to attack us, and that he had sent three different parties to warn us. He was afraid for us and wanted us to pass out to the San Blas coast through his valley. But each time his men got close enough to see our party, they got frightened and ran away. The last time he sent four men in a canoe to tell us to come up to him quick. We surprised them, and they abandoned their canoe.

He was glad, he said, that we had captured his men this morning. They had instructions to say, "Come to Chief Salisiman quick. He is your friend and speaks good English." But they got scared when they saw us. He was disgusted with them. All his men were nothing but boys—afraid like women. All the grown men got sick and died.

This story sounded pretty fishy. I thought it more likely that Salisiman had tried to frighten us away from his valley. So I told him that we were not afraid of the Wallas or the Mortis. We did not want trouble, but if they started anything, we would finish it. I had two more parties down the river, one of them only an hour from his village. And I wanted him to send four men and a canoe down to help them join me. This he agreed to do.

That night Rosebaum and I slept in hammocks in the chief's house, in clean dry Indian clothes borrowed from the chief. I dressed his wounded leg, and told him I had plenty of medicine for all his people. I gave him a hunting knife, cloth, mirrors, beads, tobacco, and had him in a very friendly state of mind before we went to bed.

The next day I stayed alone with the chief while Rosebaum and three more Indians went down to help Benton and

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Charlton. He was very friendly, and we had a long conversation. He said that his people had once been numerous and powerful, but that a few years ago all but a pitiful remnant had died suddenly of a pestilence. Whole villages had been wiped out. The chief said it was smallpox, but to judge from his description, the final blow must have been struck by influenza. Many of the people were still sick. Only about one hundred and fifty remained of the seven thousand reported by Selfridge. Most of these were immature. Salisiman, his brother, the medicine man, and perhaps two or three others were the only older people in the tribe.

Probably this recent catastrophe accounted for the fact that this handful of Indians had been able to bluff the whole region around Yavisa. They must have been "bad" and numerous not many years ago, but now they were a broken race.

The chief also said he had sent a runner over to the Morti River to see what was going on around there. He expected him back by about three o'clock. Benton, Charlton, Rosebaum, and the Panamanian captain arrived during the afternoon with all our advance equipment and the six negroes.

Soon after, the runner from the Morti arrived. He had a terrible tale to tell, as translated by Salisiman. It seemed that all the Walla and Morti Indians were arming against us. Already a hundred men had started for the mouth of the Sucubti to attack Townsend's camp. The only thing for us to do, according to Salisiman, was to leave that night for the San Blas coast and not go back to Townsend's camp at all.

This sounded like so much nonsense, and I told Salisiman I thought so. I doubted if the Mortis and Wallas were much more ferocious than the Cunas Bravos. But still I had to plan for all eventualities. So I decided to send two Indian runners to the camp with a letter of warning for Townsend, promising them an extra reward if they started at daybreak and got there

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before dark. In the morning I would start myself with Rosebaum, the Captain, and five of the negroes. I told the chief that if the Wallas and Mortis attacked us, we would certainly take care of ourselves.

Our "relief expedition" started the next morning—in five canoes with five Cunas Bravos and five of my own negroes. We made good time, and at five P.M. we arrived at a small Cuna house only four or five hours from the base camp. Here we found the two Indian messengers, still with the undelivered letter for Townsend, who should have been at the camp by that time.

They had a wild tale to tell. They said they had been all the way down to the Chucunaque and had found no trace of the camp. They concluded that the Wallas and Mortis had killed or chased away all of our companions. The more I questioned them, the more elaborate and varied their tale became. Evidently they had gone part way to camp and lost their nerve. It was physically impossible for them to have got down the Chucunaque and back again in the time allowed.

I was convinced by that time that the whole story about the hostile attack was a lie, although Salisiman may have partly believed it. Rosebaum was all for going on by dark, but I overruled him. There was no sense tiring our men out after three weeks of continuous hard work. So as soon as all the Cunas were asleep as close to my cot as they could get, I went to sleep myself, confident that all these tales of impending danger were imagination or lies designed to scare us out of the country.

The next morning we got started early. I grouped the Cunas ahead of myself and Rosebaum. They made every pretense to lag behind and slip away, but we kept our eyes on them. At eleven we reached camp. All was peaceful. No Wallas or Mortis had shown up.

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There was one piece of bad news, however. Baer was sick in bed. He had a high fever, was partly delirious and very weak. It was not malaria, typhoid, or dysentery, so we decided it was merely complete exhaustion after the strain of the last three weeks. I gave him C. C. pills and an alcohol bath. His fever went down by night, but his general appearance was alarming.

The next day he was not much better, so I decided we had better get up river as soon as possible to where there was better air and water. We spent the day repairing our canoes and preparing to start in the morning. I rigged up a comfortable bed for Baer in one of the largest canoes, with a mosquito bar and an awning.

That night we heard sounds in the jungle which might have been Morti spies. But nothing happened. It was amusing to see how the "terrible" Cunas Bravos clung to me. They huddled under a tent-fly right beside my cot. They would have got into bed with me if I had let them. Apparently they regarded me as their protector against the "terrible" Americans on all sides. When Townsend tried to photograph them, five of the seven ran to me for protection. Only two held their ground.

Early in the morning we put Baer into his floating hospital and started up river. The water level was falling rapidly after a slight rise caused by two showers on the preceding days, but we made good time. I was somewhat worried when all the Indians slipped away upstream. I was afraid they would beat it right back to their village. So I sent the Captain and Pabon ahead to catch and hold them. But at four o'clock we found them waiting at a beautiful camping site, which they had cleared for us, and started a fire.

Baer had been quiet all day. He had slept a little and seemed much better. Rosebaum and I carried him to my tent.

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Then he got suddenly worse. His temperature went up to $104\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$. He moaned and cried continuously. We waited on him, made him gruel and turkey soup, bathed him in alcohol, and attended him constantly. His fever dropped almost to normal, but he did not seem any better in other respects. I stayed up with him until midnight. No one else could sleep either, which was very bad for us all. We were so hard-worked by day that we had to have sleep by night.

So at midnight, after having tried in all other ways to keep Baer quiet, I told him that I would have to give him morphine, of which he was very much afraid. That quieted him, and he seemed better the next morning.

We got off the next morning at 8 A.M., but did not make much progress. It was terrible work trying to drag the heavy canoes over the gravel bars. What we needed was a good rain to put some water in the river. Baer was quiet all day and slept after we made camp. I stood watch that night, most of the time tending Baer. The Indians still clung to me for protection, like adopted children. They were very amusing and interesting, as well as helpful. I doled them out tobacco, fixed their sores, and seemed to have gained their confidence completely.

CHAPTER XXIII
FLOOD ON THE SUCUBTI

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THAT night the rain we'd been praying for arrived—in greater quantity than we'd expected. It started at 1 A.M. and came down in sheets. None of us had ever seen such rain or imagined it. I got up and watched the river. There was no sign of a rise until nearly dawn, although the rain kept up steadily. Then the level began to rise slowly. At daybreak it was raining so hard we had a difficult time getting breakfast.

It was Easter Sunday. The men wanted to stay in camp and not work, but I knew this would be dangerous. We were camped on a low gravel bar with no high land near. When the inevitable flood finally came, we would be in a difficult situation. So at nine o'clock I ordered everything loaded into the canoes except the tent-fly over Baer. I watched the water carefully. When it had risen until it lapped the end of his cot, I rushed him to my hospital canoe and ordered the outfit to advance.

The Indians went first in their light canoes. Then followed the negroes and the whites. Townsend had the best canoe and the best men. I had the weakest canoemen in the party—old Barbino, who was wise but rather feeble, and little Victor, who was half sick. I told Townsend to stay near me, but he soon forged ahead. Only Breder, with a heavily laden canoe and two very poor canoemen stayed near by.

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We took the water at eleven o'clock. The river was rising rapidly now, while the rain still fell in torrents. About an hour later the river rose with a roar and a bound. The "bore" of the flood from the cloudburst in the mountains came down on us in one terrible rush. In a few minutes the water rose twenty feet by actual measurement, with a current of at least fifteen miles an hour.

The "bore" caught me just as my hospital canoe was skirting a rapid. The bank behind it was an abandoned Indian banana plantation on low land. The low shrubs along the river quickly disappeared under the water. The opposite bank just above the rapids was high and sheer. Only by the hardest kind of work were we able to reach it. The shouting of the negroes and the roar of the water disturbed Baer, who tossed from side to side, almost capsizing the canoe. Barbino came to life as if with renewed youth and worked like mad.

Finally we reached the bank, but it was a sheer, vertical rise for fifteen feet. We could not land, but could hold the canoe close against the shore with poles. Enormous trees and tangles of logs came tearing by, scraping our sides. At any moment one of them was likely to crush the side of the canoe like an egg-shell. Just below us was a white and roaring rapid.

Breder's canoe had made the opposite bank, just across from us and seventy yards away. He was in slack water under the point of the curved bank. His situation was rather better than mine, but the land he was clinging to was rapidly disappearing under the water, which still rose rapidly. The rest of the canoes had disappeared around the bend.

We held our precarious positions for about an hour, when I saw Townsend shooting down toward us in a very light canoe with two Indians. I waved frantically to him to cross over to Breder's side. He could do me no good with his light canoe. I did not want to risk holding the additional strain of

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his canoe alongside mine. And if he missed me, he would be swept into the rapids below.

He got my signals just in time and pulled in beside Breder. I was barely able to hear him shouting across the roaring river. He said he had gotten all the other canoes to a safe camping site on high land about half a mile above. He had waited an hour for Breder and me and had then come back to see if he could help us. It was a pretty risky trip to undertake, and I forgave him for not keeping near the hospital canoe.

But his arrival did not improve our situation very much. I told him I could not risk going farther with Baer until the flood subsided. The high canopy over Baer's bed prevented me from keeping close to the bank under the low overhanging limbs. If I took the canopy down, Baer would get soaking wet, and if we went out into the stream, we could not reach bottom with our poles. So I told him to go back upstream and try to send me some food in his best canoe. I would hang on all night and hope that the flood would go down enough to let me get to some lower bank. He disappeared again up the stream, working his way near shore among the overhanging limbs where my big canoe could not travel.

Breder could have forced his way up to the camp in the same manner, but he refused to leave me, although his negroes wished to do so. Soon all the land on his side was under water, and he had to hold on to the trees. An hour later, with the river still rising, Townsend's canoe with two of our best negro boatmen came into sight above. It was empty except for a small amount of food, and it rode the water well. The men made a skillful landing beside me, and with their aid I was able to work my canoe a little way upstream to where I could land. I unloaded everything from both canoes except Baer, whom I could not possibly have gotten up the steep bank. He

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was comfortable, however, and the canoe was free of its heavy load and securely moored.

When Breder's men across the river saw that the food canoe had made a safe landing, they took courage and agreed to try to cross over. They worked upstream on their own side for two hundred yards. Then they pushed out into the current to cross. But instead of keeping their bow pointing upstream, they left the shore at right angles. The current caught the bow and whirled it down. By the time they had got it pointing upstream again, they had been swept past my landing and toward the boiling rapids below.

Breder's negroes became completely panic-stricken. The bow-man abandoned his post and leaped for a long rope-like vine which trailed in the water. His leap swung the stern toward the shore, and the other negro got hold of a branch and swung himself into a tree. This left Breder alone in the middle of the canoe, drifting rapidly for the white water downstream.

Right at the head of the rapids was a nasty, upstanding snag, around which the water fairly boiled. The canoe smashed sideways against it. Breder jumped up, grabbed the snag, and wrapped his legs around a heavy steamer-trunk which contained his most precious possessions—specimens, apparatus, and scientific data. It was a hopeless effort. The canoe filled with water and began to slip from beneath him. I yelled to him to let go and save himself. With a reluctant, anguished look he abandoned the canoe and clung to the snag. The loss of that cargo was a terrible blow to him and to me, but I knew he could never ride safely through the rapids.

Then happened one of the most magnificent things I have ever seen. Old Barbino, the elderly negro criminal and outlaw, let out a series of staccato war-whoops and literally pushed the four other negroes into Townsend's empty canoe. Before they

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knew what was happening, he had taken the steersman's post and sent the canoe into the rapids. Never have I seen such quick action and fire—seldom such courage. The old man's youth was back again. His eyes flashed. He cursed wonderful Spanish curses, and by force of example compelled the other negroes to meet the test. It was glorious—if it did seem hopeless. In a moment canoes and men were out of sight. I doubted if I would see any of them again.

But I had no time to be idle myself. I was alone on the bank with Baer helpless and semi-conscious in the big empty canoe. Fifty feet below and thirty feet from shore Breder was clinging for dear life to the snag, half submerged in the mad current with a death-trap just below. His cowardly stern negro was perched on a limb. His bow-man had reached shore and been forced into the canoe by Barbino.

There was only one thing to do, and that was pretty risky. I did not dare try to get Baer ashore. So after a good deal of maneuvering, I managed to get the bow-rope of his canoe around the limb of a tree. Then I gradually payed it out and let the canoe, with Baer in it, down to where Breder could get hold of the stern. It was just in time. He was tiring rapidly. When he was safely in the stern, I hauled the canoe back to land. Breder was terribly upset by the loss of his scientific data and specimens, but I tried to cheer him up by saying I thought Barbino would rescue at least some of them. It was pretty much of a lie. I did not expect to see any of the stuff again.

By this time it was five o'clock. Breder and I were alone with Baer, but we had food, cots, a tent-fly, and all my guns and ammunition. We put up the fly, and tried to make the best of a very unpleasant situation. We were on a little isolated knoll ten feet above the water. The rising river had driven innumerable insects and snakes to the same spot. Ants swarmed all over us and bit us incessantly. We put on our heavy boots,

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for poisonous snakes were all around our feet. A big tarantula jumped on Breder's face, but luckily did not bite him. All our things were soaking wet. We had a terrible time starting a fire, but finally succeeded.

Just at dusk, when the crest of the flood had passed and the water was falling very rapidly, we heard a whoop downstream. It was Barbino with all his men in the Townsend canoe, fighting up the river on the farther shore around the edge of the rapids. They got above us, crossed safely, and landed. To my utter amazement they had with them almost the entire contents of Breder's canoe. The only things missing were a small dip-net and two jars of specimens collected the previous day, which could be replaced. Breder's most valuable things had been in watertight packages in the steamer trunk, and they were wholly unharmed. It was almost a miracle.

I shook hands with each negro of the rescue crew and promised them good presents. Then, and not until then, did Barbino go out and get the cowardly stern-man of Breder's canoe, who was still perched in the tree some distance from shore. I had made no attempt to rescue him. It would have meant risking Baer again, as I had risked him to save Breder.

With their machetes the men cleared a fair camp-site. We got rid of the snakes, if not the ants, built a great fire and had a fine supper. By this time it had stopped raining and the water level was falling so fast that we had to watch Baer's canoe constantly to see that it did not settle on a submerged snag and dump him out.

By nine P.M. the river was reasonably tame again, and the moon was shining in a clear sky. I sent all the negroes except Barbino and Victor up to Townsend's camp with the message that we were all right for the night. He was to send men down the next day for Breder's canoe, which was half a mile down-

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stream below the rapids. Barbino slept in the canoe with Baer, but Breder and I stayed awake all night.

The men from the upper camp arrived at daybreak. We packed hurriedly and joined the rest of the party in half an hour. By eight we were all on the way upstream together. I was determined to reach Salisiman's village that day, for I didn't want to have Baer spend another night in the open. We got there by six and put Baer in a clean, dry cot in the Chief's house. He seemed a little better, but was still semi-delirious, moaning continually.

CHAPTER XXIV

DOWN TO THE SAN BLAS COAST

*

THE next day we all rested after our strenuous exertions, and I took stock of the situation. We had only five days' supply of our own food left. The Indians were very friendly and supplied us with all sorts of native produce, but I felt it was risky to depend on this source. So I decided to send Benton and Rosebaum with six Indian carriers across the divide to Caledonia Bay on the Caribbean coast. At Pinos Island thirty miles away by water, there was a trading schooner fitted up as a store-ship, and I hoped they could get a ten days' supply of staples there. I did not go myself because I did not want to leave Baer in his present condition.

After they left, I had very little to do except attend to Baer. So I had leisure to observe the Cunas Bravos, who had never been studied before.

The village we were staying in was nothing but a cluster of six houses. There were no women or children in evidence, only the chief and eight or ten men remaining with us. Half a mile below, however, was a fair-sized village about a hundred yards back from the river. But we were never allowed to enter it. The chief explained that we would scare the women. He even objected to the little trips which Breder and Johnson made into the forest after specimens.

In those days of waiting I discovered one very interesting

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thing. While cleaning up around camp we found a carved wooden comb with several strands of light brown hair on it. Naturally this was exciting to us. So far the white Indians had eluded us completely, but now it looked as if we were getting warm. I finally pinned the chief down and got him to admit that there were three white Indians in the vicinity—a man and two girls. The man, he said, was a "Great King." He could predict the future, could foretell storms and sicknesses. He had told Salisiman about our coming long before we arrived.

When I asked to see the "Great White King," the chief replied after a moment's hesitation, that he had gone down to Caledonia Bay. The girls had gone too. I would undoubtedly see them when I reached the coast.

This, of course, was a lie, like much of Salisiman's information. He probably hoped it would cause me to leave his valley more quickly. I saw that it was useless to question him further. I would merely get more lies.

Rosebaum returned from the coast after an absence of four days. He had Dirty Dick, six Cunas Bravos, and a Colombian negro whom he'd picked up on the coast. He had made the trip to the coast in one day—23 miles, with 58 fords, and a pass more than six hundred feet high. He had hired an Indian sailing canoe at the small San Blas village of Caledonia and gone twenty miles to Pinos Island to buy supplies from the trading ship. At Caledonia on the way back Benton had quit, complaining of feeling sick. He had gone back to Pinos Island, intending to get to Colon as soon as possible. Rosebaum had gone on alone, bringing us as many supplies as he and his men could carry.

This solved our food problem for the present, but did not solve the problem of Baer, who was failing rapidly. He was all in, could not walk a hundred yards, but he still weighed at least two hundred pounds. It would take eight Indians to

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carry him to the coast over the rough and precipitous trail.

Finally I decided that the best thing to do was to send Rosebaum to the coast again and have him go to Colon with Benton. When he got there, he could send a boat for Baer, in case we got him down alive. He could also get more supplies for the trip I still hoped to make into the Walla country around the headwaters of the Bayano.

Rosebaum left the next morning with only a single Indian guide. I planned to follow him in twenty-four hours with the whole party and twenty-five of Salisiman's Indians, but it rained hard all day, turning the streams into raging torrents. For two days we sat in camp hoping that Rosebaum had gotten through safely. The negroes wanted to take to the canoes and return to Yavisa. I was desperate. I told them that if I heard any more talk along those lines, I would smash all the canoes.

On the third day the river went down. Twenty-five Indians appeared. I left Johnson, the Panamanian captain, and a black cook with Baer. I loaded the rest of the negroes and the Indians with all the equipment they could carry and set out for the Caribbean coast. It was a terrible trip—impossible to describe. We camped that night near the head of the river, in palm "lean-tos" put up by the Indians.

At daybreak the next day we started on again. At eleven we crossed the divide. Below us lay the sea—deep blue, with a chain of small islands fringing the coast. With a feeling of indescribable relief we entered the San Blas village of Caledonia. We were still far from civilization, but any part of the sea was friendly ground compared to the interior of Darien.

It was a peculiar situation in which we found ourselves at Caledonia (which got its name from a Scotch colony abandoned several hundred years ago). This is a good time to tell something about the semi-independent nation of the San Blas

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Indians, for the rest of this book will be largely about them and their problems.

They number about fifty thousand and live chiefly on the small islands scattered along the Atlantic coast of Darien from the Gulf of San Blas to the Colombian frontier. In the sixteenth century they were conquered by gold-hunting Spaniards, but they revolted and expelled their conquerors with great slaughter. From that time on they have maintained their independence, both from Colombia and Panama.

Racially and linguistically they are "Tules," related to the Cunas of the interior. But they gain their livelihood chiefly from the sea. They are very skillful fishermen, and many of them go to Colon to get jobs on sailing vessels. They have extensive plantations along the coast near their islands. They raise only enough produce for their own use, but they have enough coconuts to supply them with plenty of money if they chose to gather them and sell them to the outside world.

In general it is safe to say that the San Blas Indians know a great deal more about the outside world than the outside world knows about them. One of the reasons for this is the inflexible rule that no white man or negro could spend a single night in any of the independent villages. The Indians would trade; they would allow "storeships" like the one off Pinos Island to anchor near their settlements. But when night was about to fall, they would force every stranger to leave.

Our situation, when we arrived at Caledonia, was peculiar because we were the only party of whites who had ever approached the San Blas Coast from the interior. The "overnight rule" could not be applied to us because we had no ships to spend the night on. So the Indians took us in hospitably for the present, debating, no doubt, as to what they would do with us finally.

Caledonia was a small settlement containing about two

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hundred and fifty Indians. It was built around a beautiful sheltered harbor fringed with cocoanut palms, with coral islands between it and the open sea. The Indians received us kindly, but that night there was a most exhaustive conference between the mountain Cunas whom we had brought with us and the local San Blas.

We sat in one of their huge rectangular houses, something like Chief Mata's "Big House" on the Pucro, but larger. The Cuna leader, a small wizened man, brother of Salisiman, chanted the story from a hammock. Beside him sat the San Blas chief, a tall dark man. Behind them sat about fifty men, Cunas and San Blas. Behind them in turn sat all the women in the village, sewing and embroidering by the light of small metal lamps with unprotected flames. They wore gayly decorated dresses, gold ear-rings and nose-rings, and red shawls. The men were smoking silently, listening to the sing-song chant about the coming of the strange Americans.

I would have given a great deal to understand the chant. The Colombian hired by Rosebaum, said he knew their language, and said the Cunas were telling the San Blas that they didn't want white men or black men in their country. But they seemed peaceably inclined, and to judge from appearances they did not seem likely to make any trouble. I learned later that Caledonia was not one of the places which they insisted on keeping free from all outside penetration. Which was the reason Rosebaum had found his Colombian negro there.

We spent the night in the village, and early the next morning I chartered an Indian sailing dugout to take Townsend, Pabon, and me to the "storeship" at Pinos Island, a big schooner anchored well off the Indian village. She belonged to the Colon Import and Export Company, a Canadian firm, and her manager was a Mr. Bird, who made us very welcome and offered to help in every way he could.

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On the storeship I found Benton and Rosebaum, both sick and anxious to get back to Colon. Rosebaum had a bad case of malaria, and Benton complained of indigestion and general depression. It turned out later that he had appendicitis. The terrible trip up the Chucunaque had affected all of us, although we did not realize how much until the crisis was over and we were in sight of civilization again. Townsend also wanted to go back, but his departure would have left me short-handed, and I persuaded him to stay a little longer at least.

The supply ship of the trading company was about to return to Colon, and with her went Rosebaum and Benton. They were to arrange, as soon as they got to Colon, for a boat to bring us supplies and take Baer back to the Canal Zone. We saw them off, spent the night on the storeship and returned to Caledonia the next day with a seaworthy skiff hired from the manager.

We found Charlton and Breder holding down the camp in good shape, and very friendly with the Indians. And that afternoon we heard some interesting news. It seemed that Ina Pagina, the head chief of all the San Blas Indians, had heard of our expedition and had gone to Panama some time ago to protest to President Porras against our invasion of Indian territory. He had just returned to his village, Nuevo Sasardi, about an hour's run from Caledonia. So I decided to go over to see him and find out what his attitude was. If Porras had been able to assure him that we intended no harm to the Indians, he could make things very easy for us and perhaps help us find the white Indians which so far had eluded us.

We arrived at Nuevo Sasardi about noon. The village, which contained perhaps fifteen hundred Indians, was built on a low coral key, no part of which was more than three feet above the level of high water. It contained about fifty tremendous houses, palm thatched, and arranged in pairs, en-

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closing a fenced courtyard. One house of each pair was usually two-storied and faced the sea. The upper floor was either of split palm or imported boards. The ground floor was sand, and was furnished with carved stools and benches. Here the Indians gathered for talking, smoking, and visiting. In the upper story they slept, in hammocks slung from the heavy roof beams. The rear house was for cooking, storage, and eating.

When we landed, we were taken to one of the houses, and seated in a sort of council chamber. Soon Ina Pagina appeared. He was a short, stocky man of about forty with a light olive complexion. He wore a white shirt and trousers, but was barefooted. He spoke fair Spanish, but no English. We greeted each other formally and sat down for a solemn conference, hundreds of Indian men crowding the great room and the space outside.

Slowly, with great dignity, Ina Pagina told me his troubles. He had, he said, a great deal to worry about. The enemies of the San Blas Indians were encroaching upon them from all sides. The ship of the Colon Importing and Exporting Company had recently arrived at Pinos Island. The United Fruit Company had started a plantation at Puerto Obaldia twenty-five miles down the coast. The New Orleans-Italian Company had got a concession right in the Gulf of San Blas. And now we had taken the Indians in the rear, by the Chucunaque route which had never been traversed by white men before.

For three hundred years, he said, the San Blas Indians had retained their independence. They had been able to deal with Colombia and with Panama. But he knew the power of the great nation which had built the Canal. And he wanted to know what we were going to do next. What did it all mean?

If I had been an employee of a fruit company, or a trader, or a gold hunter, I should probably have tried to restore his feeling of security by telling him all these new developments meant nothing but good for the Indian. That is the usual

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method of the white exploiter. But I liked these Indians too much. They had treated me well; they were attractive, hospitable, and intelligent. After a moment of hesitation I decided to tell them the truth—unpleasant though it might be.

The San Blas Indians, I said very seriously to Ina Pagina, were in a perilous situation. Their country lay only a few miles from one of the most important trade routes in the world. They had good land which they did not use. And they had no actual legal title to it. The only way they could preserve themselves from being crushed by the onward march of white civilization and its negro allies was to learn themselves the secrets of that civilization. They would have to adopt modern sanitary and medical methods to keep themselves from dying of smallpox. They would have to send their children to school. In short they would have to learn the white man's tricks, or these tricks would be too much for them. They couldn't preserve their present isolation much longer. The world had moved too near them since the canal was built.

This information was probably very distasteful to the Chief, but he took it rather well. Apparently he believed in my good intentions, for he asked me what I thought he should do.

I told him that he should call a meeting of all the chiefs of the San Blas nation. They should act together and send a delegation to Panama City to lay the matter before the Governments of both Panama and the United States. Unless they could show that they were united, they would get no recognition of their status.

The Chief said he would think it over. Then he asked what my own plans were. I told him that I would stay at Caledonia until I got my sick man, Professor Baer, down to the coast from Sucubti and shipped to Colon. After that I intended to return to the region of the upper Chucunaque and look for the white Indians which my expedition had come to find.

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Ina Pagina shook his head. The tribes of the interior were not under his control, he said definitely. They were fierce and warlike, and he thought they would kill any white man who entered their territory. Not even the coast Indians could go into the territory of the Wallas and Mortis. As for white Indians, he thought there were some living on the upper reaches of the Rio Diablo, but most of them lived in Colombia.

That was the end of the conference, which took a great deal more time than it takes to describe it. I urged the Chief again to call the "congress." He said he would think it over and let me know in a few days. I gave him some presents, and we all set off for camp. Chief Ubiquina of Caledonia stayed behind, no doubt to compare notes with Ina Pagina.

The whites who had come with me to Sasardi, Charlton, Breder, and Townsend, thought I had been too blunt with Ina Pagina. They were afraid he would turn the other Indians against us and make it difficult for us to accomplish anything more in the region. But I was sure I had done the right thing. I had told him some unpleasant truths which he would have to face sooner or later. I knew he was amply intelligent enough to realize that only a friend would have told them to him.

The next morning Chief Ubiquina returned to Caledonia, all smiles and friendliness. Apparently Ina Pagina had passed out the word that we were to be treated well, for as soon as Ubiquina arrived, his people began to bring us all sorts of presents and produce. News travels fast among the Indians, and along mysterious routes. My original plan had worked excellently. First I had convinced the Chocois of my sincerity and good intentions. The news had spread to the Cunas and thence to the San Blas at Caledonia. Finally it reached Sasardi itself. I was the first white man to gain the confidence of these bitterly independent Indians who had repelled for so long all attempts to conciliate or exploit them.

CHAPTER XXV
THE DEATH OF BAER

*

THAT ended the problem of the Indians' attitude toward us. But I still had the pressing problem of what to do with Baer. I could not leave him much longer at Sucubti. It was manifestly impossible to send him back down the Chucunaque. Even if he had reached Yavisa alive, which was doubtful, he would have had to wait there for a long time before I could get a boat sent down for him from Panama. The only thing to do was to risk the hard but comparatively short trip over the divide to Caledonia.

So the morning after leaving Ina Pagina I sent Townsend to Sucubti with four of Ubiquina's Indians. He was to bring back some of our possessions, take messages to Johnson, and report on Baer's condition. When the trading ship arrived from Colon, I would go in myself and bring Baer down to the coast.

Townsend left during the morning. In the afternoon an Indian runner arrived from Sucubti with an alarming note from Johnson. Baer was very much worse. And the Panamanian captain had deserted, leaving for Yavisa with the cook and the other two negroes. It is interesting to note that neither the captain or the negroes had been heard from since. No one knows whether they died of starvation, drowned in a flood, or were killed by Indians. But die they certainly did.

Townsend had met the runner on the trail, read his note,

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and added a postscript to the effect that I was to let him know by return messenger my decision on the changed situation. It was evident that I could not leave Baer at Sucubti with only Johnson to look after him. So I wrote Townsend to recruit enough Cunas Bravos to carry Baer, and bring him over the mountains as quickly as possible. I would take all the responsibility, but if he did not want to do it, he was to let me know at once, and I would go in with some San Blas Indians and bring Baer out myself. He would be better off on the coast, although there was little chance of getting a ship for him for some time. .

After sending off the messenger, there was little to do but wait for a reply. The issue was up to Townsend, and I would not hear from him for at least two days. So the next morning, with Breder and Charlton, I went over to Sasardi for another talk with Ina Pagina. I found the Chief sick with a bad cold. He said he was constipated and ached all over. I told him that I would go back to Caledonia and get him some medicine, but he would have to give us a house at Sasardi for the night.

His face became very serious. I knew he was thinking of the "over-night rule." Never before had a stranger spent a night at Sasardi. He said we could sleep on a boat off-shore, but not in the village.

This was an excellent opportunity, I felt, to break down further the Indians' reserve. I told the Chief that I would not bring the medicine if I could not stay on land. He relented finally, and said we might have a house. I left Breder and Charlton on the island and ran back to Caledonia for supplies, getting back about 3 P.M. I gave Ina Pagina some cathartic pills, head-ache medicine, and liniment. I also treated the local Indian judge for a badly infected leg.

Apparently my efforts as a doctor were much appreciated, for when I returned from treating the judge, I found that Ina

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Pagina had moved all our effects into his own big house, and we were settled for the night on the same floor as himself and his family.

That evening the chief and I had another long talk about the future of the Tule People. I repeated what I had told him on my first visit—that they would have to do what Japan did, catch up with the white man's civilization or be trampled underfoot by white exploiters and the negroes they would bring into the country to work for them. He listened very seriously. And finally he agreed to follow my suggestion and call a "congress" of chiefs. It was a solemn decision for him—more solemn than I knew at the time. Later in this book the reader will learn the extraordinary consequences of this action.

The next morning we had the run of Sasardi and collected for the Smithsonian a vast amount of ethnological material of great interest and rarity. We were allowed to photograph the houses and the Indian men, but not the women this time. We returned to Caledonia that afternoon, feeling that we had accomplished something which other white men had tried vainly to do for several hundred years.

As soon as we arrived at Caledonia, a Cuna messenger ran into camp with a message from Townsend. He had recruited twenty-four Cunas Bravos and started down to the coast with Baer in a hammock slung on a pole. He intended to camp for the night just over the divide and arrive on the coast in the morning. Baer had stood the trip well so far, but his general condition was alarming. He would have to be sent to Colon at once if he reached the coast alive.

In the middle of the next morning the caravan arrived. We put Baer in a cot beside mine. Morally and physically he was in the last stages of collapse. The strain of the long illness had destroyed all his hope and courage. I tried again to diagnose his trouble, but without success. He was covered with

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insect bites which refused to heal. And apparently he had internal disorders beyond my medical knowledge.

It was plain that Baer's condition was critical. We thought desperately of some way to get him back to civilization. The trading boat which I had told Rosebaum to send out with a doctor and supplies had not appeared. We had no way to communicate with Colon. None of our simple drugs or treatments seemed to do Baer a particle of good.

Finally I decided that the least I could do was to go down to the "secret" Naval wireless station at Puerto Obaldia. From there I could communicate with Colon and perhaps hurry up the relief boat and the doctor. It was the middle of the afternoon when I came to this decision, and I could not get a sailing canoe before the next day. So in the meantime I took Townsend over to Pinos Island. He too was sick by this time, and wanted to stay on the storeship in hopes of getting back to Colon sooner.

We had hardly returned to Caledonia when the Indians reported that the United Fruit Company's auxiliary sloop *El Norte* was coming down the coast. This was a good opportunity to get to Puerto Obaldia faster than an Indian canoe could take me. So I packed a few belongings, jumped into the skiff, and ran out to intercept her. The Captain said he could not stop for long, but he would take me to Puerto Obaldia. He also had some bad news for me. The vessel which had taken Benton and Rosebaum to Colon from Pinos Island had broken her fly-wheel and had had to continue under sail. This meant delay, so I was even more anxious to get to the wireless.

We reached Puerto Obaldia that night at ten o'clock—too late for communication with Colon. But the next morning I sent a message asking that a doctor be sent out on the fastest boat available. I also asked President Porras to send vaccine to

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treat the Indians at Sasardi, where a smallpox epidemic was impending.

Rosebaum answered that evening. Benton, he said, was in the hospital after an operation for appendicitis. His own malaria was better, and he would get in touch with General Sturgis at once and see what could be done. That was all for the present. I waited impatiently at Puerto Obaldia for another night, enjoying somewhat guiltily the comforts there and hoping that aid for Baer would not start too late.

The next day I got my answer from President Porras. He was sending a launch with two doctors and the vaccine. And a United Fruit boat was coming down the coast to bring Baer to Colon. That was the best I could do, so I hired a small motor-boat from the United Fruit plantation three miles from Obaldia and went back on her to Caledonia.

We got there at seven P.M. More bad news. Baer was weakening fast, and now Breder too was sick and determined to get back to Colon as quickly as possible. At last I despaired of continuing my explorations into the country of the Wallas and the Mortis. I had only Charlton and Johnson left. Disease and desertion had taken the rest. Brin was dead. Benton, Rosebaum, Townsend, and Breder were sick. Baer was dying. The Panamanian captain had deserted. The splendid expedition which had left Yavisa so hopefully was shot to pieces. And we had not seen a single white Indian, although hearing about them on all sides before we arrived at the coast.

But there was nothing to do but wait until Baer was on his way to Colon. After I had done what I could for him, I might manage to pull the remains of my expedition together. I had great hopes for the results of vaccinating the Indians at Sasardi. They feared smallpox more than anything else in the world, and I knew that to free them from this danger would gain me their confidence completely. With their aid I felt sure



*Last View of Professor Baer
After Being Carried Across Mountains in Hammock*



Professor J. L. Baer's Grave

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I could penetrate into the interior with much less difficulty.

After three days of painful waiting, the boat arrived with Porras's doctors and the vaccine. It was followed shortly after by the Fruit Company's vessel, which brought also Lieutenant Birnn, the army aviator who had piloted my plane over the interior several months before. The doctors took one look at Baer and shook their heads. He was suffering, they said, from a rare infection caused by the bite of a certain fly, which affects severely only fat people. He also had a bad case of chronic Bright's disease. Only quick work in getting him to the hospital would save him. The fastest boat would take two days. That was not fast enough.

Luckily Lieutenant Birnn had a suggestion. Two large flying boats had just arrived in the Canal Zone, equipped specially for carrying sick or wounded. We could run over to Obaldia and wireless for one of them. It could make the trip out in five hours. With desperate haste we wrote a message and sent it by the Panamanian launch to Obaldia. Then we waited, watching Baer sink fast in spite of everything the doctors could do.

We were too late. Baer died at 4:55 P.M. I was with him at the end. Just after his death I went out in front of the house, and there in the sky was the airplane sent to take him to the hospital. On it was an American navy doctor. But he could do nothing.

This blow left me utterly discouraged, although I knew I had done everything I could. The commander of the airplane said he would have to return to Colon at once, and he could not take the body with him for fear of infection. A naval vessel was following down the coast, but if it did not arrive by the next afternoon, he advised me to bury Baer. It is not possible to leave bodies unburied for long in the tropics. The Fruit

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Company boat also refused to take the body. We waited as long as we could after the departure of the plane. Then Charlton, Johnson, and I dug a grave in the coral sand under a clump of coconut trees commanding a beautiful view. We had to use our tin dinner plates, for we had no tools. The body was wrapped in an army blanket. A "good-by" and a salute was all the ceremony we felt appropriate.

The next afternoon the Naval mine sweeper *Vulcan* arrived off the reef. The Captain, officers, chaplain, and doctor came ashore. The doctor was unwilling to exhume the body for fear of infection. So the chaplain held an official service. The ship's carpenter made a wooden cross with Baer's name in brass studs. Then the *Vulcan* went back up the coast toward Colon.

CHAPTER XXVI
THE TULE CONGRESS

*

BAER'S death was a dramatic turning point in my career. In Darien. It was the lowest ebb of my hopes. The expedition had been successful in many ways. It had crossed the Isthmus by a route untraveled before. It had penetrated unknown territory and made contact with at least one unknown tribe—the remnants of the Cunas Bravos. We had collected numerous zoological specimens and a great amount of anthropological material. We had drawn the first accurate map of the Chucunaque above Yavisa.

But nevertheless we had not found any white Indians—the primary object of the expedition. We had heard of them on all sides. Baer had possibly seen one at Paya. But actually we had made no contact with them since I saw the three white girls at Yavisa a year ago.

And now with the death of Baer it looked as if we would be able to search no longer. Of the ten white men who had started with me only two remained—Charlton and Johnson. The rest were sick, dead, or had disappeared. I had malaria myself, and now that the necessity of planning to save Baer was no longer before my eyes, the disease hit me hard and “broke” only after a bad three days. One important favorable factor remained—the trust and friendship which had developed between me and the San Blas Indians.

On reading over the detailed diary which I kept of the

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expedition, I am still interested to see how my attitude toward the Indians gradually changed. I was delighted from the start with the Chocois, but I considered them merely charming children. I respected the mountain Cunas more, especially José Mata, his people and family. But not until I had been for some time on the San Blas coast did I realize how infinitely superior were the independent Indians to the mongrel negroes who were pressing in upon them from all sides.

The more I saw of them the better I liked them. They were dignified, friendly, hospitable and cheerful. They were intelligent and quick-witted. They were valiant, or they would not have kept their independence so long. They were skillful seamen and artistic hand-workers. Their social organization was highly developed and stable. I had not been long at Caledonia before I came to the conclusion that this little "Tule Nation" with its culture kept unchanged from time immemorial was too precious a thing to abandon to exploitation by commercial Americans and the negroes of Panama.

I think my mind was finally made up in favor of the Indians by the conditions which I saw and the tales which I heard at Puerto Obaldia before Baer's death. There I had my first realistic view of what happens when a white company develops Indian territory with negro labor. It is not a nice tale, or very important in itself. But it was important to me as a typical example of what I was shortly to learn was happening all along the San Blas coast.

A little while ago an American Fruit Company had secured a concession for a banana plantation three miles from Puerto Obaldia. It was a ten mile tract on the ocean, running back several miles into the interior. Along the shore were several small Indian villages with their little coconut plantations, which the fruit company did not disturb. They had plenty of land elsewhere.

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Of course the Indians did not want to work for the company. Why should they? They had independence and plenty to eat. They saw no necessity for becoming agricultural slaves. So the company followed its usual course and imported black labor. Its method of doing this was effective—if rather unusual according to civilized standards.

The blacks of the vicinity of Colon and Panama City did not want to come to Puerto Obaldia. The word had probably got around that life there would not be particularly pleasant. So the fruit company used its influence with the Panama Government. In a series of quick raids all the negro criminals, vagabonds, dope-sellers, etc., in Colon were rounded up and shipped to Puerto Obaldia in care of the local Corregidor, who was unofficially an employee of the company. Once there they would have to starve or work on the plantation.

This arrangement worked fairly well for a while, but the company's transportation proved inadequate, and the plantation ran short of food. The hungry negro criminals, left to their own resources, raided the plantations of the Indians for bananas, coconuts, and plantains. The Indians complained to the Corregidor, but he did nothing. The raids and the stealing continued.

One morning a mule belonging to the company was found with its throat cut—evidently an act of retaliation by the Indians. At once the Corregidor leaped into action, seized the six leading citizens of the nearest little village, and fined them four hundred dollars for the mule. There was no legal proof that they were implicated in the crime. It might have been any other Indian or a negro, plenty of whom had grievances against the company. The six men refused to pay and were thrown in prison for thirty days. Finally the other Indians clubbed together, raised the four hundred dollars—a large sum for them, and got the prisoners out.

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This procedure of punishing the Indians and letting the negroes do as they liked led inevitably to other outrages by the negroes. A little after the episode of the mule, two negroes surprised an Indian woman and a girl of ten in the jungle and assaulted them after threatening them with machetes.

The Indians held a meeting and reported the matter to the Corregidor. This time he appeared to take a little more interest. He held an impromptu court. The American doctor at the wireless station testified that the little girl at least had been assaulted. He could not be as sure in the case of the woman. The only evidence to the contrary was that of a negro woman, who testified that there had been no crime committed.

The two victims identified their assailants, who were arrested and sent with the sworn testimony to a Panamanian judge in Colon. The judge dismissed the case quickly, and the two negroes returned to Puerto Obaldia all dressed up in new clothes and became the heroes of the town. Of course the local interpretation of the case was that negroes could assault Indian women with impunity whenever they felt like it.

When I heard about this case, I went to see the Indian who was the husband of the woman and the uncle of the child. He was a good-looking young fellow, stolid as a grave-stone. I asked him where his wife and niece were. He said he did not know. The child had been sent away, and he had not seen his wife since the assault. Later I learned what this meant. It is the custom of the San Blas Indians to kill the victims of an assault by a negro lest the purity of their race be contaminated by negro blood. Which is probably the reason why, in spite of many similar outrages over the course of several hundred years, there are no negro half-breeds along the San Blas coast.

This was an example of the "white man's civilization" as seen in practical action by the Indians. At my conference with Ina Pagina some time before, I had told him bluntly that

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similar exploitation would spread all along the coast if he and his people did not do something about it. I knew that their traditional policy of fierce isolation could be pursued no longer, and I told them so frankly. But after leaving Puerto Obaldia, I felt a strong desire growing within me to do something about it myself.

The problem was complicated, to say the least, for Panama cannot be considered an entirely independent country. Under its treaty with Panama the United States is obligated "to intervene at any time, in any place in the Republic of Panama to uphold the constitutional order, law, and peace of the land." I knew that if the aggressions continued, the Indians would fight. They had done so many times in the past with success. But now the situation was changed. They would be revolting not against feeble Panama alone, but against Panama backed up, most likely, by the power of the United States.

I decided that what the Indians needed most was a spokesman to place their case before the American government. I felt that the only solution for their problem was to persuade Washington to have the San Blas coast set aside as a sort of reservation under an American of high character. Only such an American could introduce schools and sanitation. The Indians would fight rather than accept the priest-ridden school system of Panama or the corrupt government officials who were sure to work for their own pockets while pretending to help the Indians.

Such were the thoughts running through my mind when Ina Pagina announced that his "Congress" of chiefs was about to convene at Sasardi. I was having my worst bout with malaria, so Chief Ubiquina brought the early arrivals over to Caledonia to call. They all wore big straw hats, carried canes of authority, and looked very dignified and of strong character. I was too sick to give them proper attention, but the fever "broke" that

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night, and the next morning I went over to Sasardi to attend the "Congress."

By that time I had my plan pretty well perfected. From the friendly attitude of the chiefs, I felt sure I would get a fair hearing. They knew that I was disgusted with the treatment their countrymen had received at Puerto Obaldia. They were grateful for the medical aid I had given them, and they had allowed themselves to be vaccinated without protest by the doctors sent by Porras. This was very significant in view of the fact that four years ago they had driven out another group of Panamanian doctors who had tried to do the same thing.

The "Congress" was ready for me in Ina Pagina's big house. More chiefs were expected later from the more distant regions, but already some had arrived from as far as eighty miles up the coast. It was a very impressive gathering. The solemnity, tragedy and dignity of the old chiefs was very appealing. They all knew very well that their "nation" had come to a crisis, and they listened intently while I told them through an interpreter my view of their perilous situation.

First I told them what had brought me to Darien—my meeting with the white Indians at Yavisa and the eagerness of the scientists of America to know more about them. I still hoped to find them, although so many of my companions were sick that I could not go into the interior valleys where they were supposed to live. I explained that nothing would arouse more sympathy among the powerful Americans than the knowledge that some of the Darien Indians had white skins like their own.

The chiefs said nothing, but I felt my words had made an impression on them. Then I went on to tell them frankly what I had told Ina Pagina—that the Tule race was doomed to extinction, mongrelization with the negroes, or practical slavery if they did not train themselves to meet the white man's civil-

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zation on its own ground. They must learn the white man's cures for smallpox and malaria. They must learn to read, so that they would know what was going on in the world outside. They must learn about money and trade so that they could sell the coconuts and the other products of their land to advantage.

And finally I made my proposition. I offered to take a delegation of Indians with me when I returned. I would take them first to Panama City and later to Washington. I would present their case to President Porras and to Secretary Hughes. And I would ask that their territory be set aside forever, as an inviolate reservation where no Panamanian negroes or American corporations should penetrate to exploit them.

But, I warned, these benefits would not come by themselves. They must be paid for. The San Blas coast was rich in coconuts, of which the Indians did not use or even gather a twentieth part. They were esteemed the best coconuts in the world and commanded the highest price. I explained that if I were able to get an American commissioner to watch over them, they must gather all the coconuts and allow the commissioner to supervise their sale to the best advantage. This would pay for the medical attention and the schools they needed.

It was quite a speech and it took a long time to translate piecemeal into the Indian language. The chiefs nodded gravely and reserved their decision. Finally Ina Pagina thanked me and said they would talk my proposition over among themselves and let me know soon. I left and returned to Caledonia.

The next day Ina Pagina arrived in a sailing canoe with a new group of chiefs whom I had not seen before. I ushered them into my house and they sat down with an air of great seriousness. Ina Pagina was the spokesman as usual.

"Do you still want to take some of us to Panama and to Washington?" he asked.

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"Yes," I said. "I am still willing."

"What will we have to pay you?" asked Ina Pagina.

"Nothing," I said.

"How soon can you start?"

"As soon as I can get a boat."

"There is a big trader's yawl at Pinos Island," said Ina Pagina. "Can you return on that?"

"Yes," I said.

Ina Pagina hesitated a moment. Then he looked at me very intently. "Do you still want to take with you some *Chepu Tules*—white Indians?"

"Yes," I said eagerly, hardly able to believe my ears.

"The people along the coast all want to see you," said Ina Pagina. "There will be many *Chepu Tules* among them. You can take all you want."

They rose, shook hands gravely, and went back to their boat, leaving me in a state of bewildered exaltation. I had crossed the Isthmus with tremendous difficulty. I had searched numerous little known valleys. I had exhausted myself and my companions without finding a single white Indian. I had seen none on the coast, or met any one else who had seen one. And now, as soon as I gained the confidence of the Indians and convinced them that I was going to try to get them a square deal at Panama and Washington, the *Chepu Tules* were offered to me freely, as if they were the most ordinary things in the world.

I did not know what the white Indians would be like when I saw them, but I trusted these dignified chiefs. I knew they would do what they promised. The mystery would finally be solved, and I could take actual, living white Indians to the United States where the scientists could squabble over them to their hearts' content.

CHAPTER XXVII

WHITE INDIANS AT LAST

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THE next morning we went to Sasardi for another conference. Ina Pagina said he would be ready to leave with me for Panama and Washington in five days. He had two interpreters, one who knew Spanish and one who knew English. The first he planned to send back from Panama; the second was going with us to Washington. The yawl would arrive presently from Pinos Island. We could sail back on her to Caledonia, pick up the rest of our belongings, and work our way up the coast, stopping at the various villages.

After these matters had been arranged, I made a final round of the sick people in Sasardi. Some were in the last stages of tuberculosis. I could do nothing for these, of course. But others had malaria, constipation, or badly infected wounds. I treated them as best I could with my standard medicines.

When I was through, I found that the promised yawl had anchored in the bay off the village. It was too late for a large ship to pass through the reefs to Caledonia, so I told the captain to meet me there tomorrow. Then I set out myself in the small boat. The yawl arrived in the morning as arranged. We got aboard and started for home—on what proved to be a triumphal progress up the coast to Colon.

We arrived at Sasardi late in the afternoon and anchored off the village for the night. The next morning Ina Pagina

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told me that he would not be ready to start at once, but he had arranged for another boat to take him to Colon where he would join me. He had sent word along the coast that I was coming. I could cruise slowly toward Colon, stopping at the various villages, and picking up the white Indians which he had promised us.

The next considerable village up the coast was Navagandi—which had the reputation of being one of the most anti-foreign communities on the coast, with the most warlike Indians. But I had met the chief of the village at Sasardi, so I knew it would be all right to go ashore there. We found the town a very pretty place, somewhat smaller than Sasardi, with a population of about a thousand.

The chief greeted us in a very friendly manner, but we did not stay long. The harbor was none too good, and the run between Navagandi and the next village, Portogandi, was very nasty when the wind blew from the sea, as it usually did. Soon after we arrived, a fine land breeze sprang up, and we decided to take advantage of it.

We reached a beautiful safe anchorage at Portogandi at two o'clock in the afternoon. At once we realized that it was the most interesting Indian town we had yet seen. Its population was perhaps 1,650 all told. There were at least three hundred large houses on a small island half a mile from the mainland. The general appearance was very picturesque. Great numbers of canoes with both men and women in them flocked around us.

And here we saw our first white Indians—one of whom, a boy of fourteen, was brought out to our boat immediately, as Ina Pagina had promised.

He certainly made a strange appearance among his dark-skinned countrymen. His hair was light golden yellow. His skin was as white as a Swede's. His eyes were brown, not blue

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or gray. His features were decidedly different from the rest of the Indians—rather more like a Nordic white man. And his whole body was covered with fine downy white hair, three quarters of an inch long.

I looked at him with amazement. Here was my white Indian at last. But I didn't know what to make of him. He wasn't the usual type of albino by any means, for albinos have pink eyes and white hair. But whatever he was, the scientists would have a grand time explaining him. At least they couldn't fall back on the old theory that white Indians existed only in the imaginations of wild-eyed explorers. We had not only seen them, but were bringing them back to America to be studied at leisure.

After examining our first "Chepu Tule," we went ashore and visited the Chief and headmen of Portogandi, the most anti-foreign of all the San Blas villages. Our reputation had gone before us. We were enthusiastically greeted as the friends of the Indians. Everywhere we went hundreds of little children followed us and fought to hold our hands. The women were no longer afraid, but brought us presents. We were given full permission to wander about the village, taking pictures and examining the houses, boats and other possessions of the people. It was rather exciting to realize that no white man had ever had such privileges at Portogandi before.

That night we slept on board the yawl, and at the crack of dawn were awakened by swarms of visitors. I spent the morning, which was rainy, writing up my diary and trying to make the remnants of my clothes a little more presentable. At noon a messenger from Chief Nellé arrived, asking me to come ashore for a formal reception.

The chief received us in his enormous house, one of the biggest we had seen yet, 120 feet long by 80 feet wide. He lay in a hammock, Indian style. Beside him was a large carved-

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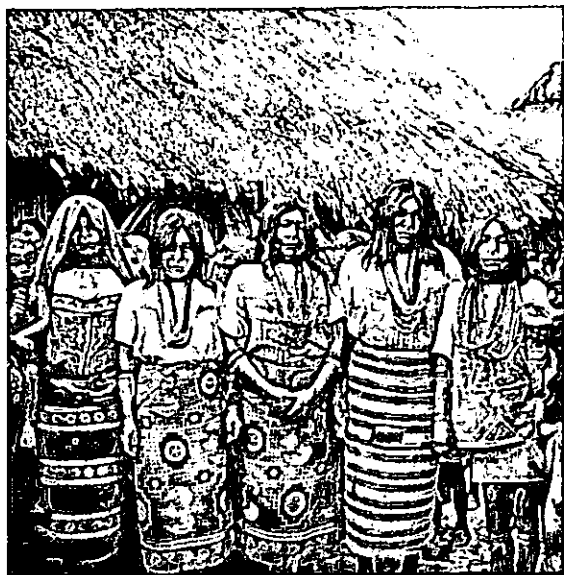
chair for me. The Indian interpreter sat on a stool in front of us.

We were hardly seated when a young woman was brought in with a bad case of malaria. I gave her a couple of cathartic pills for luck, and then a supply of quinine with instructions for how to take it. When the Indians saw I had medicine with me, they took me next door to see a man in the last stages of tuberculosis. I gave him a mild cathartic, but attempted nothing else. Then I explained to the chief and his people that some diseases could be cured easily if taken in time, that others required long treatment, and that some could not be cured at all.

This led to a long discussion of sickness and medicine. The Indians listened eagerly to such scraps of medical knowledge as I could give them. I explained that diseases were chiefly caused by germs, not by evil spirits as they thought. I told them about vaccination and how it had freed America and England from the plague of smallpox which was such a terror in Darien.

From smallpox I turned to malaria and yellow fever, and explained how they were caused by mosquitoes. Then to typhoid and dysentery, usually caused by bad water. The chief and his head-men listened gravely, and nodded when I insisted that only by proper education and attention to sanitation could they learn to curb and cure these diseases.

Chief Nellé said he knew what I said was true. That was the kind of education the Indians wanted, but it was not what the Panamanian government was accustomed to offer them. The government schools never taught them the good parts of education, but only the bad habits and traits of the white man. It taught the Indian men to use bad language, to lie and to steal. It taught the women to be immoral. He wanted Americans to teach his people, not Panamanians.



San Blas Girls



*Chief "Nelle," Chief of Portogandi,
Great San Blas "Medicine Man"*

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Then the Chief asked about the world, how large it was, how big the United States was, and how far away. So I explained that the earth was round and drew maps on the sandy floor. The Indians listened eagerly while I explained how the earth was formed, how life appeared upon it, how man first appeared, and how the Indian was descended from the same ancestors as the white man. I told them how the races differentiated from each other. Some progressed. Some stood still. Some went backward. The Indian, I said, was standing still, while the white man and even the black man were progressing. Only by acquiring education could the Indian progress also.

Finally I told him how much I wanted to take some white Indians back to the United States with me. They might help prove closer relations between the Indian and the white man. He said it was good. He would see that I got all the white Indians I wanted.

This lecture took three hours to deliver and translate. After it was over, I was asked to look at more sick people. How they came! Men, women, and children! Some had malaria, some rheumatism, infected sores, skin diseases. Fortunately I had plenty of quinine and other standard remedies. Many of their ailments required only the simplest treatment.

This took the rest of the afternoon, and we returned to the yawl for the night. Early the next morning the negro captain of the yawl told me that the Panamanian Government, under the influence of the Catholic Church, was trying to prevent the Indians from wearing their gay native costumes, and wanted to reduce them to the hideous single-piece "mother-hubbards" worn by the negroes near the Canal Zone. My reaction to this was to buy from the captain all the bright cloth and trinkets he had on the yawl. The San Blas costume is extremely picturesque and very modest. The women wear

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a blouse gayly decorated in many colors, a long, appliquéd skirt, and plenty of golden ear-rings, nose-rings, beads, etc.

I took the gifts ashore and began distributing them to the women. When I was finished, I went into the Chief's house again to talk to the head-men who had gathered there. I urged them to be proud of their race, to adopt modern education and sanitation. I had completely gained their confidence by this time, and they told me much more about their recent history.

In particular they were very bitter against the Panamanian Government for trying to force upon them negro teachers and policemen whose chief interest was to treat the men as animals and degrade the women. The government had secured a foothold on the Gulf of San Blas a hundred miles to the north, and there the conditions were worse. The negroes were acting as if all the Indian women were their personal slaves.

When I went back to the yawl, a party of Indians came out and got aboard. Chief Nellé had kept his word very promptly. With them was a little naked white boy about eight years old. He had golden hair and eyes which varied from blue-green to brown. The Indians who brought him said they were going to take him back on shore for the night, but that the next day the chief would make me a formal present of him.

That afternoon we went back to the village. I told the chief casually that I would like to buy some pottery, arrows, spears, wooden images, baskets, etc. In no time I was mobbed by hundreds of men, women, and children bringing me all sorts of things. I got barrels full—elaborate, artistic pottery, gayly decorated grass baskets, weapons, carved canes, alligators in clay and wood.

The price didn't seem to matter. I paid a few cents each. In a few minutes I had all my canoe would carry, but still

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the people came. I think every family in the village brought something to sell me or give me. I retreated to the yawl, but the deluge continued, and I had to take them all, including song birds, fruit, and beautiful gay dresses with strange hieroglyphic embroideries. In two hours I collected more San Blas works of art than all the museums in the world possessed. By evening the hold of the yawl was full of ethnological specimens of every conceivable kind.

The next morning I went ashore for a farewell talk with the chief. When he appeared, he was wearing a magnificent gold and feather crown, with three long, upright plumes of bright scarlet. He said it was a relic of ancient times when the chiefs wore such crowns on special occasions. When I admired it and asked to take a picture of him wearing it, he took it off and gave it to me with a smile. I decided that the Smithsonian would have to be very nice to get it from me.

After a brief talk I left the chief and went to visit some of the sick Indians I had treated the day before. While I was doing this, I got word that the parents of the little white boy wanted to see me. Their house was a large and prosperous-looking one. When I entered, I got a surprise. The mother and father of the boy were not white. They were ordinary Indians without anything unusual about them except that the father was rather tall. They had three other children. The second boy was also white, but the two girls were olive brown like their parents.

I didn't know what to make of it, but I had no time to think, for I had other surprises in store for me. Chief Nellé's message had gone out to the surrounding country, and more white Indians were coming into town from the mountains, the jungle rivers, and the smaller islands along the coast. Some were pure white. Others were midway between white and brown. We took pictures of them and questioned them with-

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out reserve. The negro captain of the yawl was perhaps the most astonished man in the party. He had traded along that coast for ten years and had seen in the distance only one or two white Indians. He had no idea there were half so many in the whole country.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CHIEF GOLMAN

*

EARLY the following morning we set sail for the next village, Alligandi. We took with us the little white boy, whose name was simply "Chepu," which means "white." With us was the son of Chief Nellé, a good-looking young brown Indian, who was to act as interpreter. The father of the little boy left us at daybreak, and a light breeze bore us slowly through the narrow passage of the harbor and into the open water beyond.

Alligandi lay about eight miles up the coast. Its Chief was reported to be a very old and very cantankerous person who had opposed bitterly and successfully all attempts of the Panamanian Government to place schools or police officials on his island. His name was Golman, and his reputation among the traders along the coast was very strongly established.

We passed enroute two small villages on the mainland, but did not stop. Many canoes put out from shore, headed by one with two white Indian boys in the bow. They motioned to us to stop. I was hesitating when a large sailing canoe came alongside. In it were eight Indians—one of them a white youth of about eighteen. He handed me a piece of paper, on which was written in English the following message:

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To Mr. Marsh. San Blas Coast. Alligandi.

DEAR SIR:

If you please can come to my island quickly. I am waiting for you. I want to talk to you too. These Indian men is coming for you. I want you to come with these Indian men: because this ship is coming too slow for you, and because has no breeze. So I want you to come with these men.

I Remain,
Yours truly,

MR. GOLMAN.

Chief of the San Blas Coast.

The breeze got stronger just then, so we did not have to transfer to the canoe, but ran alongside it to Alligandi, reaching the village about 2 P.M. It was on an island about half a mile from shore and was approximately the size of Portogandi. As we dropped anchor half a dozen canoes with white Indians in them came out to meet us. Among the crowds on shore were many more, women and girls as well as men and boys.

When we landed, we were greeted by polite, smiling Indian policemen with their carved canes of authority and escorted to the house of Chief Golman. In the big council chamber were gathered two hundred men, seated on benches around a hammock in the center. We were led to a bench facing the hammock. Soon our old friend Chief Nellé of Portogandi appeared and introduced us to many fine-looking old Indians in the gathering.

Finally entered a very old Indian, shaking with palsy and wearing a black derby hat. He was Chief Golman. He said, "Sit down," in English. Then he lay down in the hammock, held out one shaking hand, and asked if I could do anything

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for it. I said I could relieve him a little, but only a long treatment in a hospital would do him any good.

"I am an old man," he said in English. "I die soon."

Then, through his nephew the acting chief, who spoke and wrote English, he asked all about us. I told him my story and what I planned to do to help the Indians. Then he brought out a parcel of letters which he had written to the Panama government, protesting against outrages perpetrated by the Panamanian police—wanton killings, threats, attempts to force negro school-teachers upon his villages, attempts to make the women give up their native costume. He said President Porras had told him that Panama was his father and the United States his grandfather. But, he said, Panama was a bad father. Only the grandfather could help the Indians now.

These letters were marvels of Indian expression. We read them all, and I asked for copies, which he said he would provide the next day. Then I repeated my talk at Portogandi, telling how I hoped to persuade the American government to provide schools for the Indians. He said schools were good, but they must be American schools. Panamanian schools were not good for the Indians. The talk lasted two hours. All the Indians smiled and nodded approval. Finally the old Chief told me to come back the next day and we would talk some more.

When we left the house, we saw many more white Indians in the street—whole families of them. The word had passed up the coast, and they were flocking in from the mainland. There were even more than in Portogandi. I was amazed and bewildered. Dim reports of such people had drifted up to Colon before, but no reputable person had seen them, and no one dreamed that scores of them lived within a day's march of the main villages. At the time I had no theory to account for their origin or the fact that the outside world had been

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kept so completely in ignorance of their existence. But at Alligandi I was to learn the amazing story—an explanation which a part of the scientific world has doubted, but which I have every reason to believe is strictly true.

From the lips of the Indians themselves I heard the following story. Before the coming of the Spaniards there were many white Indians in the region (as the Spaniards noted in their reports). But the white Spaniards treated the Indians so badly that after they were driven out of the country, the Indians turned against those of their own people who also had white skins. They killed many and drove the rest into the mountains and the jungles. They were determined not to have a hated white face in their country.

But white Indian children continued to be born among the brown Indians. The white strain or the white-producing principle was deeply imbedded in the Indian blood. These white babies were not all killed. Fond parents hid them in the mountains and jungles. Finally the Indians passed a law forbidding them to marry. But marriage or no marriage, white babies continued to be born, both to white mothers and brown mothers. The laws of nature were stronger than the laws of man.

This was the situation when I arrived on the San Blas coast. The white type was despised and ostracized. They were forced to live in out of the way places, where no traders or other outsiders could see them. But my arrival, and my conviction that if I could take white Indians to Washington, they would arouse sympathy for the San Blas people, had changed all that.

With joy I learned that Chief Nellé, supreme power in his own tribe, had announced before all his people that as the result of what I had told him, the segregation of the white Indians was terminated. They were no longer forbidden to

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marry. They were restored to all the privileges of citizenship.

This was why they were flocking into the villages to see me. From being the objects of pity and disgrace, they suddenly found themselves vindicated and exalted. They were to be the means of interesting the great nation to the north in the troubles of their people.

These revelations cast more light on the origin of the white Indians. Now I knew where they came from and why they had remained unknown for so long. And gradually I came to realize that I had hit upon one of the most extraordinary ethnological discoveries of all time. The magnitude of it appalled me at first. But here was no escaping the conclusion. Here in this obscure corner of the world I had found a race undergoing a "mutation" into something new—a phenomenon never observed before.

The white Indians were born of ordinary brown parents. But they were not albinos in the ordinary sense of the word. A true albino is merely an individual who lacks pigment. The white Indians had less pigment than their dark relatives, but their hair was always golden, not white. And their eyes were green to brown. Furthermore, there were various degrees of whiteness. I saw individuals who were midway between white and brown.

It might be said that they were "partial albinos," but so, for that matter, are all members of the white races. One of the definitions of the white races, according to very orthodox scientists is as follows—"partial albinism, fixed and reproducing its own kind." The "mutation" or change from one type to the other occurred in the case of the Nordic races ages ago. The new type had time to become standardized and uniform. But in Darien I was witnessing the first crude beginnings of the process.

No wonder I was anxious to get out to civilization, where

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I could offer my discovery to the scientific world for study. I knew it would cause an acrimonious controversy, but I was ready for the battle. If the interest I aroused should result in the preservation of the San Blas Indians from negro mongrelization at the hands of the Panamanians and the fruit companies, my efforts would not be in vain.

At a conference with Chief Golman the next day I made the final arrangements for taking the delegation to Panama and Washington. In the process I learned something more about the recent history of the San Blas Coast. Chief Golman told me that he was not on the best of terms with Ina Pagina. It seemed that before Panama seceded from Colombia, there were three chiefs who claimed to be supreme over the whole coast. These were Golman of Alligandi, "Charlie Robinson" of Rio Diablo, and Ina Pagina of Sasardi. For a long time old Golman had been dominant. Chief "Charlie Robinson" was nearest to Colon, and two years ago his village had been attacked and captured by Panamanian police. After a bloody battle Chief Robinson was deposed, and a Lieutenant of Police put in charge of his village.

During this affair Golman had been so violent against Panamanian encroachment that the government had threatened to send a force against Alligandi too. To fend off this danger, Golman had been forced to abdicate in favor of his nephew, although the Indians still considered him the chief.

This technicality, however, eliminated Golman as recognized head chief and left Ina Pagina with the clearest claim to the title. He was so considered by the Panamanian government, which had bestowed upon him the rank of "General." Golman was without question the stronger character, but I saw that in the negotiations which I intended to initiate between the Indians and the governments of Panama and the United States I would have to consider Ina Pagina the leader.

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So with all the persuasion I could bring to bear I urged Golman to make an agreement with Ina Pagina so that the Indians could present a united front toward the outside world. It was an unpleasant decision for the old chief. He did not like Ina Pagina, nor did he think he was a good leader. But finally he agreed to call a conference of all the sub-chiefs under his influence, invite Ina Pagina, and grant him the undisputed primacy for the time being.

I do not know all the details of this conference, but it was attended by representatives of all the San Blas Indians and by many Tule chieftains of the interior valleys. Ina Pagina attended and was recognized for the time being as the supreme head of the whole "Tule Nation." He was to go with me to Washington and plead the case of the Indians before the governments of Panama and the United States.

A party of nine Indians was finally chosen to make the trip. They were selected for both political and scientific purposes. The leader was Ina Pagina, who brought as his interpreter a young man named "Philip Robinson" who had had four years' schooling in New York under the protection of an American army officer. Chief Golman sent his nephew and successor, Iqua-neg-di-pi-pi, with "Alfred Robinson" the English speaking son of Chief Nellé of Portogandi for interpreter. There was also "Jim Barre," relative of the chief of Nargana who had been deposed by the negro "Colonial Police" of Panama. With him went his wife "Alice Barre."

The above was the "political division." The scientific division consisted of three white Indians—Marguerite (or Mimi) a girl of sixteen, Olo-ni-pi-guina, a boy of fourteen, and Chepu, a boy of ten. If I had not had to consider the cost I could have taken many more. Almost the whole tribe, white and brown, wanted to go with me to Washington.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE BATTLE OF THE SCIENTISTS

*

IN due course we all boarded the yawl and sailed slowly up the coast toward the Canal Zone. On the way we passed the ten San Blas villages which had been captured and occupied by the negro soldiers of Panama, but we gave them a wide berth. They are sufficiently described later on.

Late one afternoon we arrived at Cristobal, the American city at the Atlantic terminal of the Canal Zone. I took the entire party to the Government hotel, the Washington, and had the Indians outfitted with palm beach suits, modern dresses, and all the accessories for both men and women.

Naturally our arrival created quite a stir in the Zone. Governor General Morrow, who had been so skeptical about the very existence of white Indians, gave us a splendid reception in the Administration Building, and President Porras invited us to his Palace at Panama City.

And almost as soon as we landed, there started that long battle with the newspaper men which I learned to my sorrow was to continue until well after I reached Washington. In Cristobal I was besieged by reporters demanding all the details of our expedition. Particularly they wanted to know about the white Indians, weird rumors of whom had preceded us up the coast.

But before leaving the United States I had sold the ex-

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clusive "rights" to the expedition to the North American Newspaper Alliance and the Gannett papers, which had sent Benton as their representative. Although Benton had left the party some time before and was already on his way to New York, I was still bound by the contract. I explained this fact to the local reporters and told them that I could not give them any part of our "story."

This didn't discourage them, of course. When they found they couldn't get anything from us, they invented "news" of their own and gathered the opinions of various people who knew absolutely nothing about the expedition or about the white Indians. I had promptly cabled a long account of our discoveries to the United States, and this was published in full. But only brief and fantastic summaries came back to the Canal Zone.

Among the people interviewed by the local reporters was a traveling collector for certain American museums who claimed falsely to be on the staff of the Museum of the American Indian in New York. He burst into print with a statement that the whole thing was a fake and the white Indians mere albinos. Other critics maintained that I had smuggled ordinary white people into the San Blas country and was passing them off as white Indians.

One enterprising reporter even cabled to the Smithsonian that I claimed to have found forty thousand white Indians in Darien. What I really said was that there were about that number of Tule Indians in Darien, including two thousand of the blond type. We had actually seen perhaps four hundred of the latter.

When this cable reached the Smithsonian, one of the most prominent scientists in the institution immediately broadcast to the public that there couldn't be forty thousand white Indians in Darien. There could only be a few scattered cases of albi-

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nism. And that it was imposing upon the public to give out such statements.

Breder, the accredited representative of the American Museum of Natural History, was now sufficiently recovered from his combined attack of malaria and typhoid to join us at Colon. He examined the white Indians and cabled to his own institution that they were not albinos in the ordinary sense and that they differed in other respects from the standard brown Indians.

Thus began the "Battle of the Scientists," which raged fiercely in the learned journals and the popular press. An immense amount of misinformation was passed about freely and a great deal of sensationalism based on no statements of mine. I shall tell more about this unsavory controversy later on, but at this point I shall record only the facts about the white Indians which are generally accepted by most recognized authorities.

The controversy narrows down essentially to the definition of albinism. The ordinary medical albinos, which occur very sparingly in many races, are totally devoid of pigment. They have white hair, pink eyes, and wholly white skin. My white Indians were not ordinary albinos in this sense. They had yellow hair, blue or hazel eyes, and were normally healthy, both mentally and physically.

They can be called "partial albinos," but this proves very little, for on the authority of the leading biologists and geneticists, the term includes all of the white races, which are composed of "partial albinos" when compared to the darker races. It is generally accepted that the Nordic race originated in some form of "partial albinism" in a small group. Its coloration is not the result of climatic conditions, for dark races live in other parts of the world quite as northerly and sunless as northern Europe.

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It is agreed that the white Indians are not strictly a race. They appear as the descendants of ordinary brown parents, and the law which until recently prohibited their marriage had made it impossible to determine conclusively whether or not they breed true to type. There are two theories to account for their appearance among the brown Indians. The first, which is most widely accepted, is that they are "Mendelian recessives" of blond pigmentation, originating from a biological mutation. The second theory is that they descend from some blond race which mingled with the Tule in ancient times.

I will leave the controversy at this point. As Dr. Herman L. Fairchild has pointed out in his articles in *Science*, the dispute has narrowed down to one of *naming* and not *explaining* the phenomenon. It has not been observed elsewhere in the world, and simple albinism is not a sufficient explanation.

To return to my party of Indians at Colon. My first practical difficulty was with the Government of Panama. Theoretically my Indians were Panamanian subjects. Actually they were representatives of a tribe in a state of defensive opposition. But still it was necessary to get Panamanian passports for them before they could leave the country. And this was not easy to do. A wave of opposition—perhaps premonition—spread through Panama against my taking the Indians to Washington.

Finally President Porras intervened with the local authorities and ordered passports for all the Indians except Ina Pagina. He was practically the chief of a tribe at war with Panama, and public opinion would not sanction granting him a passport. The local police at Colon even arrested Ina Pagina and threatened to throw him in prison. I managed to persuade President Porras to give him his freedom and permission to return to his own country, but I could not get him a passport. Ina Pagina never forgave me that dénouement, for it hurt his prestige among his own people, who assumed that I had turned toward

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Chief Golman's faction and therefore did not want Ina Pagina on the trip.

Next I had trouble with the steamship line of the United Fruit Company. My three white Indians were all minors, and I was not their parent or guardian. This conflicted with the rules of the steamship company. Finally I had them booked as the children of Chief "Jim" Barre and his wife "Alice."

When we arrived at New York, the immigration authorities raised another set of objections. My white Indians were really scientific specimens, but their status as such was obscure. Apparently you can import various things for scientific purposes, but not human beings. Finally I arranged to deposit a bond of five hundred dollars for each Indian as a guarantee that they would leave the country in three months.

As soon as I got my charges safely within the borders of the United States, I took them to the Waldorf Astoria, where a reception and banquet had been arranged for them. It was attended by the leading scientists of the vicinity. There were representatives of the American Museum of Natural History, of Columbia, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, the Carnegie Institution, and New Jersey State College. But there was no one from the Smithsonian. I turned the white Indians over to the scientists for examination, while the newspaper reporters awaited the verdict.

At last the scientists issued a statement for the press. There were many conflicting opinions. Wooten of Harvard inclined to my own theories. Others thought the white Indians were "a non-morbid pathological phenomenon"—whatever that may be. A Dr. Christi of London, a famous specialist on tropical African diseases, recalled that certain Negroes showed a condition caused by syphilis which produced patches of white skin. He thought my Indians might be suffering from a similar ailment and proposed to honor me by naming it "Marsh's Disease."

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I declined the honor. I did not consider the condition a disease, and I did not want to run the risk of reports in the papers insinuating that I had given that hypothetical disease to the Indians! One point, however, was agreed upon by all the scientists present—that the white Indians were *not* ordinary albinos.

The next day I sent all my Indians up to the American Museum of Natural History for further examination and left them there for several hours while I attended to other matters. I was astonished the next morning to read in the papers that the white Indians were undoubtedly “partial albinos” and that the marked difference in head-shape between the white and brown Indians was caused by “artificial deformation of the skull.” The anthropologists of the American Museum advanced the theory that the normal brown Indians were more highly esteemed by their parents and had been subjected to artificial deformation of their skulls to “enhance their beauty.”

This was news to me, so I investigated. I found that the scientists had questioned the interpreter, Chief Barre, as to artificial deformation. Naturally he did not know what they were talking about. So the scientists asked if the Indian mothers did not “pat” the heads of their babies. The chief said they did.

When I explained the matter to Chief Barre, he almost fell over laughing. Of course, he said, the mothers patted their babies. They were as affectionate as any other mothers. But the Tule Indians never practiced artificial deformation of their children’s heads, which grew as nature intended.

Not a word came from the Smithsonian since that first blast of denunciation while I was still in Panama. I had promised all my ethnological collections to the Smithsonian, but my annoyance over that gratuitous attack was so great that I had them stored at the American Museum and refused to go to Washington as I originally intended.

At that time I had at my disposal a large and isolated

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summer place in Canada, just below the Thousand Islands on the St. Lawrence. So I took my entire party of Indians there, still accompanied by Major Johnson who stood by me with utmost loyalty. We had no difficulty whatever with the Canadian immigration officials, and my Indians, a very sensitive and proud people, were spared the constant exposure to the uncouth manners of my fellow Americans, who treated them like wild animals whenever they appeared in public.

There, with complete privacy from public intrusion, my Indians regained their self-composure. The British Association for the Advancement of Science was holding its annual meeting at Toronto. I kept open-house to all accredited British scientists, who could observe and study the Indians without making them feel like animals in a zoo. Famous British scientists, Balfour, Huxley, Cunningham, Shrubshall, and many others visited us, amid surroundings permitting sensible study and investigation, staying several days at a time. We were invited to attend the meetings at Toronto. The Indians for the first time received proper scientific consideration.

Huxley, Balfour and Cunningham agreed with me that the phenomenon of the white Indians originated either as a biological mutation or through the interbreeding of blond and dark races. Huxley inclined to mutation, and wrote several articles upholding his belief in the British scientific publications. Balfour and Cunningham kept open minds between the two theories. Shrubshall inclined to "partial albinism," as did some others. But all approached the subject in a reasonable and scientific manner.

The British Association for the Advancement of Science passed a formal resolution thanking me for my contribution to science in bringing the white Indians to them. The Toronto Exposition offered me a large fee if I would exhibit the Indians publicly at the Exposition grounds and give a lecture each

THE BATTLE OF THE SCIENTISTS

afternoon and evening. I declined. My Indians dreaded and resented such public exposure, but welcomed serious visiting scientists to our isolated home. Finally some of the better mannered American scientists visited us. Watson Davis, on the staff of Science Service at Washington, spent several days. He became one of the best friends my Indians or I have ever had. Letters began coming from the Smithsonian, which I threw in the waste-paper basket.

At last a leading official of the Smithsonian visited me with an expression of regret at the unjustified attack of their prominent representative and requested that I bring my party to Washington. The very courteous and fair consideration I had received in Canada, together with the passage of time, had mollified me considerably. I replied that I would come to Washington and turn over my Indians and collections to the Smithsonian provided I first received in writing a full apology and retraction from the representative who had so condemned me in my absence. I wanted the right to make that apology and retraction as public as the attack on me had been. I also demanded assurance that my Indians would be treated with full courtesy. The Smithsonian official agreed that my conditions were justified. I received a three page complete retraction and apology from the offending scientist, which I still retain. I have never made it public, but have shown it to some of my scientific friends.

In Washington we received a grand reception. Scientists and representatives attended from all the governmental departments and museums, from the Carnegie Institution, the National Geographic Society, etc. A committee was appointed by the American Association for the Advancement of Science to make a study and report on the scientific aspects of the white Indians. It was composed of Dr. Stiles, pathologist, Chief of the U. S. Public Health Service, Dr. C. M. Davenport, geneticist

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of the Carnegie Institution, and Dr. Ales Hrdlicka, anthropologist of the Smithsonian. I secured a large suburban house in Chevy Chase, on the outskirts of Washington, and again held open house to all accredited scientists.

On the day we moved from our quarters in the Willard Hotel to the rented house in Chevy Chase, I came down with a sudden attack of long delayed malaria. For three weeks I was about as sick as any one ever gets and still recovers. Only the constant personal attendance of Dr. Stiles and his staff of medical assistants and nurses pulled me through.

Meanwhile, my Indians were enjoying Washington. With their innate culture and dignity and their quick perception, they readily became acquainted with "civilized" ways. They were now getting the friendly and courteous reception they so lacked on their arrival. They attended luncheons, afternoon teas and social functions with propriety and self-possession which surprised and perhaps disappointed their hosts and hostesses.

Three leading scientists and linguists, Dr. Harrington, ethnologist of the Smithsonian, Vogenitz, the linguistic expert of the Post Office Department, and Dr. Gates, of Tulane University, a recognized authority on Mayan culture, lived at our house with the Indians and made detailed studies of their ethnology and language. A vocabulary of six thousand Tule words was developed. Their language was recorded on dictaphone records. A system of phonetic writing was devised, and a thorough analysis made of it. Finally the linguists came to me and reported, "The anthropologists can tell you what they please, Marsh, but some ancient Norse people certainly taught the Tule People their language." They found that the Tule language had a Sanskrit or Aryan structure, not *mongoloid*, and they discovered over sixty words identical with early Norse. For details of the Tule language I refer the reader to the appendix of this book.

CHAPTER XXX

"THE TULE PEOPLE MUST FIGHT!"

*

IT was December before I recovered sufficiently to get back to the main purpose of my mission. The scientific committee issued a guarded and non-committal report that the "white Indians" presented a very interesting and important scientific problem. Too little was known about them as yet to draw definite conclusions. They recommended that another scientific expedition be taken to Darien to make a detailed study of the white Indians in their home environment. I offered to lead and finance this proposed new expedition, to be sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science and its affiliated organizations.

However, in spite of their hesitancy to pronounce a final word on the "scientific composition" of the white Indians, the scientists' committee did formally announce, through Dr. Ales Hrdlicka, that the Tule People apparently were a practically pure-blooded remnant of the ancient first dynasty Mayans and also related anthropologically to the early coastal cultures of Peru, the Yuncas and the Chimu. This alone was of great scientific importance, for the original first-dynasty Mayans and the pre-Inca coastal Peruvians are now vanished races, overwhelmed and amalgamated by later conquering peoples.

I announced that I first wanted to save these Tule People from threatened destruction and Negro mongrelization by the

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encroaching Panamanians who were already entrenched on the San Blas Coast and planning a complete conquest of Darien. Finally an unofficial organization was formed in Washington to take measures "to preserve and protect the Tule People." It included representatives, in their individual capacities, of all the governmental departments in Washington, of leading scientific institutions both in Washington and other parts of the country.

Resolutions were passed by scientific organizations throughout the east and south and as far west as Kansas City and Denver, requesting the U. S. State Department to make proper representations to the Panamanian Government. They called attention to the great scientific importance of the Tule People and requested that the Panamanian Government take suitable steps to preserve and protect them, for scientific as well as humanitarian reasons.

But I did not hope for much from the Panamanian Government. My friend, President Porras, had been succeeded in office by President Chiari, uncle of the Dr. Raoul Brin who had started with our expedition and died on his return to Panama City. Chiari was notoriously a "creditor's candidate." He owed the local banks and financial interests so much money that their only hope of collecting their debts was to elect him president, so that he could use the advantages of his position to repay his creditors. Chiari planned a campaign of "Christianization and Civilization of Darien." There was more quick wealth to be looted there than in any other portion of the Republic of Panama.

The representations of the American scientific bodies were forwarded through our State Department to the Panamanian Government. And the answer told us more or less politely to mind our own business. We had not treated our own Indians



*A Mountain Walla Indian Girl
from the Interior*



*Niece of the Great Chief Golman,
Aligandi, San Blas*

“THE TULE PEOPLE MUST FIGHT”

any too well and need not intervene in the treatment of theirs. Which was a rather difficult thing to answer!

Our last meeting of scientists “to devise ways and means to preserve and protect the Tule People” was held in the Cosmos Club at Washington. The scientists felt we had done all that was possible. But I said I wanted to *save* the Tule People—not merely talk about it. Then the eminent scientist from the Smithsonian, now my friend and ally, took the floor. We might differ bitterly about scientific interpretations but not on social and humanitarian grounds.

“The Tule People must fight,” he said. “Where in all the world did any people ever get justice without fighting for their rights?”

It was a packed meeting. Representatives were present from the State, War, Commerce, Agriculture, and Interior Departments, and from all the scientific centers from New York to Washington.

“I know it,” I answered. “I want you to understand it, so that when the Tule People *do* fight for their very existence, and the United States Government intervenes as required under the Hay-Banan-Varilla Treaty, that intervention will be on the side of the Indians and not against them.”

After that meeting at the Cosmos Club I knew that my purpose in Washington had been accomplished. I had brought the Tule People to the notice of many influential men in the United States Government, and I had aroused much sympathy for them. If it came to an open war, as I was almost sure it would now that Chiari was President of Panama, I felt I could count on friendly, not hostile intervention by the United States.

The recently planned scientific expedition to study the white Indians in their native country was abandoned. Quicker and more direct action was needed. Little Chepu, the youngest of the white Indians, I left in the United States to be reared and

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educated as my ward. The rest of the Indians I took back at once to Panama. Major Johnson went with us, and we were joined by Dr. Reginald G. Harris, a competent geneticist who was the Director of the Biological Laboratories at Cold Springs Harbor, Long Island, and who represented the Carnegie Institution. Dr. Harris was accompanied by his wife, daughter of Dr. Charles M. Davenport, the famous geneticist of the Carnegie Institution.

Our departure from Washington via New York was kept as quiet as possible. When we got to Cristobal, on the Canal Zone, we put up again at the Government Hotel, the Washington. Presently I received two callers. One brought a confidential message from Ex-President Porras, telling me that Chiari intended to prevent my return to Darien. And later arrived a delegation of San Blas Indians, who came by night in their own canoes to the Washington, which fronts on the Caribbean.

We held a council of war in the hotel, and late that night all my Indians departed in the canoes of their countrymen for their homes a hundred and fifty miles down the coast.

Next day President Chiari sent a personal messenger to me, requesting my presence in the Presidential Palace at Panama City on the following morning. I acknowledged the summons. But that night I chartered a local auxiliary trading schooner and departed at midnight for the San Blas coast, accompanied by Dr. and Mrs. Harris and the ever faithful Major Johnson.

CHAPTER XXXI

PREPARING FOR WAR

*

THE first night out from Colon was a rough one. Our little motor schooner, the *Impco*, tossed and plunged on the roughest seas the Captain had ever experienced in those waters. Johnson and Harris were sea-sick, but Mrs. Harris and I came through without trouble. Our cots on deck had to be lashed. Twice Johnson was tossed out on the planking, and in the middle of the night the ship hit something hard which shivered her from stem to stern. It must have been a coral reef, for she sprang such a leak that the crew had to man both pumps to keep her afloat.

At 9 A.M. we reached San Blas Point, which marks the beginning of the Indian country, and we ran through a narrow channel into quiet water behind the coral reefs. Inside the point lies Parvenir, headquarters of the Panamanian police and the residence of Mojica, the so-called "Governor of San Blas." We did not go ashore. No one came aboard, and soon we were off for Cardi, a large stronghold of free Indians on a cluster of islands at the southern end of the Gulf of San Blas.

The chief of Cardi was one of the Indians who had come to the council of war in the Washington at Cristobal. But although Cardi was still free of Panamanian police, I did not want to stop to see him there. The village was watched too carefully by Indian spies in the Bay of Panama. So I did not

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land at Cardi, but sent word to the chief to come and meet us at Alligandi, where all the Indians were known to be loyal.

From Cardi we continued straight down the coast to Nargana, the home of "Jim Barre" and his family. There we remained overnight, but although Nargana is under control of the Panamanian police, not one of them came near us. At Nargana Dr. Harris had the opportunity of examining eight white Indians and got complete data concerning their genealogy, which was very important to him and pleased him very much.

All that night our ship leaked so badly that extra Indians had to be hired to man the pumps. If it had not been for me and my party, the captain would have returned to Colon to put her in drydock. We left Nargana early in the morning and ran straight through to Alligandi, stopping a moment for clearance papers at the island of Mono, the last outpost of Panamanian authority. Not until then did I breathe easily. I had been afraid that the Panamanians would try to stop me. But Mono was their last chance. I learned later that Governor Mojica and his leading assistants were away on an inspection trip.

In Alligandi we were safe from all interference. It was the first of the entirely free villages, and it was the home of Golman, the fine old chief who was the real leader of the Tule People. We were given a royal reception, and a large house was set aside for our use. The Indians crowded around me, the little children following me in droves and struggling to hold my hand.

That afternoon we had a preliminary conference with Chief Golman in his audience hall. Many of the coastal chiefs were there, and several from the tribes of the interior. But Ina Pagina was absent. He had sent word that he would come if I stated in writing that I wanted him. Apparently he was still

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resentful over not being taken to Washington. I sent him a message promptly, urging him to come by all means. What the Indians needed most was unity.

During my consultation with the chiefs, Dr. Harris and his wife were examining the numerous white Indians who had come in from the mountains. Harris was tremendously excited by his findings. He said there was no possibility that they were albinos. They were something entirely new to science. Mrs. Harris had expected to go home on the *Impero* when it returned to Colon, but she was so delighted with the Indians that she decided to stay over for another ten days so that she could sketch them and model them in clay.

The next day was a rather exciting one. We had our first encounter with Governor Mojica. About eleven A.M. the Panamanian auxiliary schooner, *El Norte*, dropped anchor in the bay. I knew that she was expected, so I had placed all my party out of sight in the village. On board were Mojica and four armed policemen. With them was Ina Pagina, whom they were ostensibly taking to Panama to protest to President Chiari about certain outrages recently perpetrated. I thought it was more likely that they were taking him to prison.

As soon as the *El Norte* had anchored, Chief Golman sent out a big white Indian in a canoe to report who was on her and what they wanted. As soon as he got on board, he was seized by the police, shaken roughly, and dragged before Mojica for questioning.

Particularly Mojica wanted to know what my party was doing in Alligandi. But he got no information from the Indian, who replied doggedly that he knew nothing about our activities or our intentions. Mojica then asked what house we were staying in. The Indian said he didn't know. The policemen beat him cruelly with their fists, but still he kept silent.

Finally Mojica said that if the white Indian did not tell

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what house we were living in, the Panamanian Government would send airplanes to find out.

"Very well," said the white Indian. "Send the airplanes. Then the Indians will find out if Panama has any airplanes."

Mojica flew into a rage. Of course Panama had no airplanes, as the Indians know perfectly well. He threatened to kill the Indian if he would not tell where the Americans were.

"Kill me," the Indian replied. "I am not afraid to die. The Americans are my friends, and I will not tell you anything about them."

"You are a brave man," said Mojica.

"Yes," said the Indian. "I am as brave as you are."

All this took place on the *El Norte* not more than a hundred yards from shore. Hundreds of angry Indians lined the water-front, prepared to launch their canoes at a moment's notice and board the ship. I kept out of sight in one of the houses and through interpreters told the chiefs to keep their men in check. I did not want to start a fight unless necessary. The Indians were wild with rage at the treatment of their countryman, but they obeyed orders well.

I had no intention, however, of letting Mojica take the white Indian away as his prisoner. I issued orders to watch the anchor of the *El Norte*. If the Panamanians started the slow process of raising it by hand while the Indian was still on board, they were all to launch their canoes and rescue him.

Mojica took note of these preparations. Finally he let the white Indian go, after telling him to warn his people not to have anything to do with the Americans. Then the *El Norte* raised her anchor and sailed for Colon.

So much for my first encounter with Mojica. I was glad I had not met him personally. He was technically governor of San Blas, and I did not want to be put in the position of rejecting his orders at this point. I knew that he considered

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us dangerous troublemakers who were likely to expose the graft and injustice of his administration. He would undoubtedly find some pretext for ordering me out of the country. So it was fortunate that I had been able to keep out of his way for the time being.

That night we had another conference with the chiefs, more of whom had arrived in the meantime. The Indians were full of fight and anxious to attack the Panamanians at once. But I held them in check by telling them the unpleasant truth. They might be able to kill or expel all the Panamanians along the coast, but that would not be the end of the matter. Panama would send a ship with big guns, which could lie off shore out of reach of the Indians and wipe out every island village. The Indians on the mainland could fight off any force from Panama, but if the island Indians retreated there, they would lose their villages and their plantations. The best thing to do, I told them, was to wait and see if the United States would intervene in their favor.

After long discussion the Indians agreed to follow my advice. They would not allow any Panamanians to land on their islands or enter their villages, but they promised to keep away from the police and their boats.

Another decision was to post guards to keep watch all night. A little time before, the Panamanians had attacked the Indian village of Azucar in the middle of the night while the people were all asleep. They had killed the chief and the leading men and had held the village ever since. We did not intend to have that happen at Alligandi.

All this time the Harrises and Johnson were collecting data about the Indians, both white and brown. Their efforts were made easy by intelligent and enthusiastic coöperation on the part of the Indians, who had previously resisted all attempts to study them. Among the more important discoveries

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was a book filled with native picture-writing which was brought in by a head-priest. The characters were not mere allegorical pictures such as the Indians often draw, but actual hieroglyphics.

After the day of Mojica's visit, things seemed to quiet down somewhat, and I saw a chance to make my long-planned trip to the interior. It looked much easier now than ever before, for the Indians were with me, not against me. They had always prevented explorers from passing into the country of the upper Bayano from the Caribbean coast, but I was different. They not only gave me permission to go everywhere I wanted, but offered to carry my baggage and arrange for coöperation from the interior Indians.

Chief Nellé of Portogandi had great influence with the mountain Indians because of his reputation as a "doctor" and spirit medium. He had just sent messengers asking all the Walla chiefs to come down to the coast to meet me and take me back with them. Naturally I was rather excited and eager to start, for the Bayano was completely unexplored country.

While I waited, I devoted myself to Indian politics. Every evening we held big meetings in Chief Golman's house. New chiefs were constantly arriving—from the mountains, from Pinos Island, from Navagandi, Portogandi, Cardi, and Tigre. They insisted that I make a speech every night. I would tell them to work together, forget their petty squabbles and weld themselves into an effective unit.

Gradually I saw that my efforts were bearing fruit. The sub-chiefs were beginning to rally around old Chief Golman and his adherents, Chief Nellé and the head-chief of Cardi. Ina Pagina had returned by this time from Panama, and still resentful about the episode of the passport, was trying to undermine my influence. But even his own followers were deserting him.

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One of the chief grievances of the Indians was the fact that over a hundred negroes had camped on Pinos Island, near Ina Pagina's village of Sasardi and were sending strong parties of rubber hunters into the interior from there. They were destroying the wild rubber trees, overrunning the Indian plantations, and threatening the Indian villages. Ina Pagina had done nothing to drive them out, and they were becoming stronger and bolder every day. He had protested to President Chiari, but got no satisfaction. I found later that Governor Mojica received a fee from each rubber-hunter.

The Indians were exceedingly bitter about the negroes at Pinos Island, and I had no doubt that they would attack and drive them out of the interior sooner or later. The matter was complicated by the report that the negroes were led by two Americans, explorers for the United Fruit Company. I made it very plain to the Indians that whatever they did to the blacks they must not harm the Americans, who would be forced to leave in any case as soon as their black followers were killed.

A few days after the departure of Mojica, two American airplanes appeared over the village from the direction of Colon and flew back up the coast an hour later. Evidently Mojica had reached Panama with tales of a threatened uprising, and General Lassiter had sent planes to investigate. This was a very encouraging sign, for it showed that the American authorities in the Zone were taking interest in the developments along the San Blas Coast. Investigation was the first step toward intervention, and American intervention was just what we wanted.

I felt that this was the proper moment to write a letter to General Lassiter, telling him what was going on in Darien. The *Impco* was about to sail on one of her trips to Colon, I could give the letter to the Captain.

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My letter to Lassiter was a rather long one and need not be quoted here in full. I told him why we had come, and what we had done so far. And I drew a rather detailed picture of conditions in the territories under the care of Mojica. I told about the numerous outrages committed against the Indians by the negro policemen. How villages had been attacked and conquered. How men had been imprisoned for trivial reasons so their wives could be attacked while they were in jail. I told how young girls had been arrested for resisting the attentions of a negro, and then kept in jail until they submitted to outrage.

All these facts, I wrote, had come to me from responsible Indians whom I knew and trusted. The result of this set of conditions was that the Indians were leaving their homes in the occupied villages, abandoning their plantations and possessions, and escaping by night to the villages which were still free.

I told about the critical situation developing at Pinos Island, and warned him that resistance by the Indians was sure to come if the rubber-hunting negroes were allowed to continue their depredations. I assured him that the Indians were armed—mostly with shot-guns sold illegally by Governor Mojica—and that they would fight bravely and successfully against further encroachments.

Finally I told him about the decisions of the Indian "congress." They demanded that their country be set aside from the public lands of Panama and not granted to concession hunters. They wanted some just system of settling disputes before an outside court, preferably American. They would accept schools only if they were adapted to their requirements, which the Panamanian schools already established were not. And they demanded that further encroachments cease at once.

I made it as plain as I could that I was not inciting the

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Indians to revolt, but that I was their friend and devoted to their interests. So far my advice had been entirely peaceful. I signed the letter with my full name and told the General that he might use it in any way that he thought advisable.

After I got the letter off on the *Impco*, I set again about my plans to explore the interior. All looked peaceful enough, and the Indians were more than willing to coöperate. I intended to leave as soon as the Harrises returned from Portogandi, where they had gone to examine the white Indians there.

My equanimity was somewhat disturbed the next day by an Indian messenger who arrived by canoe from Cardi. He said his chief had heard that Governor Mojica had threatened to return with two hundred police and burn both Cardi and Alligandi. The chief asked instructions. I sent back word that it sounded like empty talk, but that he should be prepared and should resist further encroachment to the last ditch. I really thought this was only a rumor, although the Indians were not as optimistic. Their tempers rose quickly to the boiling point, and I had all I could do to keep them from starting an attack on the nearest Panamanian posts.

For a time I seemed to be right. A later report arrived to the effect that Mojica was still in Panama City and was making no move to attack Cardi and Alligandi. I hoped that my letter would reach General Lassiter before Mojica could do anything rash. And I made my plans to set out for the interior the next day.

But the situation was worse than I'd thought. Another report arrived that night. Mojica had renewed his threat and according to the messenger had actually started down the coast. I doubted this last item, but the Indians did not. There was no holding them now. They felt that they should prepare for

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war and attack before the arrival of Mojica and his force. Reluctantly I gave up my exploration plans. I had made the decision to stand by the Indians in their crisis, and I determined not to run away, no matter what might be the consequences to me and to them.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE TULE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

*

THE next few days were occupied with feverish conferences in Chief Golman's big house. I knew it was too late to try to pacify the Indians. They knew as well as I did that they would have to fight for their rights. The best I could do was to persuade them to make their actions regular and deliberate, so as to make the best possible impression upon the outside world.

To this end I told the Indian "congress" about the American Declaration of Independence, which had been adopted and signed under very similar circumstances. Its purpose, I said, had been to demonstrate to the world that the American Revolution was no mere temporary revolt, but a determined attempt to gain recognition for an independence and self-sufficiency which already existed in fact. The Tule people were a genuine nation, although a small one. They were homogeneous in blood and in culture. They had kept their soil inviolate for many centuries. They were now being oppressed and encroached upon by a handful of negroid Panamanians whose chief power came from the fact that they claimed the United States was behind them.

As strongly as I could I impressed upon the chiefs how impossible it would be for them to oppose the United States. They could revolt against the Panamanians, but if the United

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States backed Panama and supplied arms and equipment, their bravery would be in vain. Their only hope was to enlist the sympathy of the American authorities. And the best way to do this was to adopt a dignified and formal Declaration of Independence, relating their very impressive grievances and presenting their demands as an independent nation.

It was amazing how readily the chiefs saw the point. They had no respect whatever for Panama, but they appreciated the overwhelming power of the United States. Immediately the Congress set about drawing up its Declaration. As each suggestion was made in the Tule language, it was translated to me. I wrote it down in English, trying to preserve as best I could the dignity and seriousness of the original. I also made suggestions myself, which the Indians discussed and incorporated into the document.

When the Declaration was finally finished, the chiefs came forward one by one to sign it. It was an impressive occasion, and the chiefs realized the seriousness of their action as well as I did. If the revolt failed, if the United States supported Panama, the negro troops would find the Declaration a very convenient blacklist of their enemies.

Then the Congress turned to planning the campaign for the coming war. With great unanimity a course of action was decided upon. First the Indians of the interior were to drive the negro rubber hunters to the coast and give them an opportunity to get away to Colon. The Indians of Cardí and the Gulf of San Blas were to capture Parvenir, the headquarters of Governor Mojica, and move eastward down the coast. The people of Portogandi, Alligandi and the eastern villages were to advance westward, cleaning up the Panamanian posts and meeting the Cardí people midway.

I took little part in these final discussions. The Indians seemed to be able to handle their military problems alone.

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

I was worrying chiefly about what to do with the Harrises and Johnson. Finally I decided to send them with an escort to Matungandi, an Indian stronghold on the headwaters of the Bayano. They would be as safe there as anywhere else, and they could study the Indians of the interior to good advantage until the crisis was over. I arranged for them to leave as soon as they got back from their trip to Portogandi.

Naturally I was very much disappointed that I could not go with them. That trip to the interior had been my dearest ambition for more than a year. But I decided that the best thing for me to do was to go to Cardi, which is the nearest Indian village to the Canal Zone. I wanted to be on the spot, so that I could speak for the Indians if the American Authorities decided to intervene, as I hoped they would.

The normal way to get to Cardi would have been to get hold of some small coastal trading boat. But for my purposes this would have been dangerous. Such boats have to stop at the occupied villages for clearance papers, and I feared the Panamanian police might attempt to remove me from the scene of action. In fact, the report had come to me that Governor Mojica was threatening to shoot me on sight. He was a foolish, rattle-brained person who talked too much, but still I didn't want to take any unnecessary chances.

So I chose a stanch little sailing dugout, about twenty-five feet long with a five foot beam and a crew of six. One of them was a big white Indian who had attached himself to me as a sort of bodyguard. He explained naïvely that he intended to "eat Mojica's head" as soon as he could get hold of that morsel. Another was "Charlie-gets-his-man," so named by Harris after he had told with great directness about how he had "got" a traitor to his people. I wanted him for interpreter, for he could speak good English and had been all over the world in foreign ships.

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The other four in the crew were boatmen, and the San Blas boatman is about the most skillful and competent I have ever seen or heard of. It takes four men to operate a sailing dugout in the open ocean. One sits in the stern to manipulate the steering paddle and the main-sail. Another sits in the stern, to tend the jib and watch for the numerous rocks and coral reefs. The other two are "balancers," who stand amidships on the windward gunwale, supporting themselves by ropes from the mast.

With every wave and gust of wind these "balancers" swing out over the side to shift ballast and keep the canoe on an even keel. Sailing such a dugout is something between riding a bicycle and walking a tight-rope. It requires constant alertness and superb seamanship.

We left at 11 A.M. and took the sea route, outside the occupied islands. The wind was blowing toward the shore, and we wanted the windward position in case of emergencies. The sea was rough and choppy, as it usually is in the Caribbean. A longer boat would have pitched and rolled badly, but our little cockle-shell bobbed on the waves like a cork. These San Blas canoes are perfectly adapted to the local conditions, and when manned by a native crew they are very seaworthy. But to look at us, no one would have thought we could last a minute.

After a four-hour run we came opposite Mono, the first of the Panamanian outposts. Here we had a choice of two courses. One was a detour several miles out to sea around an area of coral reefs. The other was an inner channel which ran within a quarter of a mile of the island. We took a chance on the latter, as we still had the advantage of a position to windward.

When we got well into the inner channel, we saw skirt-ing around the end of the island a large canoe carrying two

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Panamanian policemen in uniform and seven "tame Indians." Evidently they were trying to intercept us, and they could have done so easily if they had handled things correctly. We were following a crooked channel through the reefs which forced us near them.

But just when it seemed as if they would head us off, the "tame Indian" who was handling their main-sail lost the rope, whether on purpose or not I do not know. But this lost them their chance. Their boom fell out of place and their boat swung off her course. We passed triumphantly fifty yards ahead of their bow and could hear the policemen cursing the Indians.

As soon as they could, the Panamanians put about and started chase, the men using their paddles as well as their sails and slowly gaining. I told my men not to paddle, but to continue on their course, appearing to pay no attention to the other boat. The Panamanians yelled for us to stop, but we kept on.

Presently one of the policemen stood up and fired at us with a rifle, missing us widely. This was getting too personal, so one of my men raised his high-powered Savage and put a bullet into the police canoe. The effect was immediate. This was more than they had counted on. I was in Indian costume, and they evidently took us for inoffensive delegates returning from the conference at Alligandi. The tame Indians stopped paddling at once and started for home, while my men speeded them on their way with triumphant taunts.

So much for the first exchange of shots in the Tule War of Independence. I was much encouraged by the episode, for my men handled themselves splendidly.

Ten minutes after routing the police canoe, we passed a small island in the channel. Just as we sailed by on one side, Governor Mojica's auxiliary schooner, the *El Norte*, passed on the other, heading in the opposite direction. Apparently no

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one on board noticed us, or attached any importance to us.

We didn't know who was on board the *El Norte*, but we did know that as soon as she reached Mono, the shooting would be reported, and she would turn back after us. I calculated that we would get a three-mile start. She could not over-haul us for an hour. But there were three hours of daylight left. If we stuck to the regular channels, we would be caught before it got dark.

The only thing to do was head for the dangerous water among the coral reefs where the *El Norte* could not follow. It was an exciting experience. We picked channels hardly fifty feet wide, with the seas breaking and foaming all around us. Several times our little canoe was almost swamped. But luck was with us. After a wild ten miles through the reefs, we passed into deep water just as night fell.

On we went, now about two or three miles from shore. The wind and waves eased up a bit. It was cloudy, and there was no moon. We steered by my pocket compass and the roar of the surf.

At 1 A.M. a sudden rain-squall hit us. We could see nothing and hear nothing but the rain. Suddenly the bow-man gave a yell, and we heard a loud crunching as our little canoe smashed down on a submerged reef. Instantly a huge wave dashed over us, filling the canoe half full of water. Three times we heard the sickening crunch of the bottom on the coral.

But the Indians were ready for any emergency. Quick as a flash the stern-man let go the sail. The others began "back-paddling" while I bailed frantically. One more wave would have filled us, but just in time we wallowed off backwards. The bow swung up into the wind and the canoe rolled sluggishly. Soon we had her bailed out and were safe in the lee of the reef.

Then my irrepressible crew broke out into cheers and

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laughter. What a temperament! Every contest with nature was a personal victory for them. We had bested the Panamanian police. We had slipped by the *El Norte*. And now we had escaped the reef. We all felt as if the fates were with us.

At two the sky cleared and the moon came out. We ran for a small coral island, found a sheltered harbor, and went ashore. Soon we had a fire blazing. We all stripped and dried our clothes, while I brewed a big pot of coffee. By three the wind had shifted a few points to the east. We set off again with a moon to guide us through the reefs, and laid a straight course for Cardi.

We arrived just at daybreak, after a fine, fast run with a favorable wind. The head-chief of Cardi invited me into his house and soon I was asleep in dry clothes.

After four hours' sleep I got up, found the chief, and demanded the "news." There were two items of importance. The first was that four days ago four American submarines had appeared in the Gulf of San Blas and paid a visit to Cardi, the officers coming ashore and asking for me. When told that I was at Alligandi, they said they already knew it. Then they left for their ships. I was much cheered by this. At least it was a sign that the Americans were keeping an eye on the San Blas coast. I felt confident that if the American authorities knew enough about the situation, they would not let Mojica and his negroes murder the Indians and burn their villages as he had threatened to do.

The second piece of news concerned Mojica. An Indian spy at Parvenir had reported that the *El Norte* had sailed for Alligandi with the Governor and a strong force of police. I suspected as much when we passed her near Mono, but I had not seen who was on board. The spy reported further that Mojica intended to drive us from Alligandi. But he was too

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late. He would find that his birds had flown, and the Indians of Alligandi were ready to welcome him with more than a hundred guns and two thousand rounds of ammunition.

By the time I had caught up with the news, a great crowd of Indians was assembled in Chief Olopinginua's big house, which was furnished with benches like a Town Hall. The chief explained that many head-men from neighboring villages had come to see me, and he asked special permission to let the women also attend, as they were anxious to hear me too.

So with "Charlie-gets-his-man" as interpreter, I took my place on a chair in the center of the hall. Charlie stood beside me, with the chiefs reclining in hammocks and the crowd pressing in from all sides. Charlie was an excellent interpreter, and I think the Indians got the meaning of everything I said. My speech was much like those I had made in the other free villages. I recounted what I knew about the history of the Tule people. I outlined their perilous position in the modern world. And I urged them to make themselves into a unit, the better to contend with the encroaching Panamanians.

When I had finished, the various chiefs made replies, and I could appreciate the eloquence and sincerity of their words even through the medium of the translator.

Chief Olopinginua was the last to speak, and his words were the most moving of all. He said he had lived long as a man surrounded by a dark cloud—the threat of negro Panamanian conquest. He could not sleep peacefully at night. He tried to encourage his family and the men of his village, but always the dark cloud had chilled his heart. Now, however, the cloud had disappeared. He could see the sun in a clear sky. Peace and happiness were in sight again. He felt as if he had awakened from a bad dream, he would fight for his people's freedom to the last, and he would die rather than let the dark cloud fall over his soul again.

CHAPTER XXXIII
WE DECLARE WAR

*

THEN came a dramatic incident. A messenger strode into the assembly hall with a letter for me from Chief Golman. It was written in English by his interpreter, Louis. The messenger had brought it through in a day and a night.

The morning after I left Alligandi, said the letter, the *El Norte* had dropped anchor in the harbor. On board were Governor Mojica with a large force of armed negro policemen. Golman gave orders that all the Indians stay on shore except Louis, the interpreter, who went out to talk to the Governor from a canoe.

Mojica asked where I was. Louis said I had gone to the mountains. Mojica said he had come to drive the Americans out of the San Blas Coast. If the free villages did not submit to his wishes, he would burn them, starting with Alligandi, Portogandi, and Cardi. Louis replied that the Indians had decided to fight for their freedom. Then Mojica said he would go to Puerto Obaldia and return with two hundred armed men.

Louis went back to the shore and reported all these things to Golman. At once orders were issued that no Indian men leave the island. They got out their guns and ammunition and prepared for a fight. But while they were doing so, the *El Norte* raised her anchor and sailed away for Puerto Obaldia.

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I read the message before the assembly. It was translated by Charlie. The Indians listened in complete silence. I told them that this was their fight, not mine. If they wanted to fight for their freedom, I had pledged myself to help them all I could. If they did not want to fight and were content to remain under Panamanian rule, all they had to do was tell me so, and I would go away.

Immediately there was an uproar. Men and women rushed to me, grabbing me, shaking my hands, all talking and shouting. When the tumult died down sufficiently, I was told formally that they were all ready to fight for their freedom and would not let me go. They would rather die than give up to the Panamanian negroes.

The decision had been made. I told the Indians that there was no time to waste. Mojica might arrive any moment, and we did not know what village he would attack first. They must bring all their guns, powder and shot to the big house, where we could get them ready for action.

At once the Indians scattered around the village, and soon the armory began to form. There were a few modern, high-powered rifles, many breech-loading shot-guns of various sizes, and a great collection of old-time muzzle-loaders using primer caps. Many of the guns were rusty and dirty, but the Indians began industriously to clean them up and get them into shape.

Soon it developed that we had very little ammunition. This was serious, but luck was with us. In the harbor off Cardí was one of the "store-ships" of the Colon Import and Export Company. I knew that she carried guns and ammunition, although to do so was contrary to Panamanian law.

I went out to the "store-ship" in a canoe with a few Indians. The manager was away on the *Impco*, and the ship was in charge of two Panamanian negroes. We found several shot-

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guns, a keg of Dupont powder, eight sacks of buck-shot, and plenty of empty brass shells of the sizes we needed. But we found no caps or primers, and all the shot-guns in the world would have been useless without them.

We cross-questioned the negroes and learned that all the caps and primers were in the safe. It was closed, and they did not know the combination. Only the manager could open it.

I was stumped for a time, for the safe was too solid to break open. Finally I noticed written in the wall above the safe three numbers in lead pencil—31, 49, 61. They were evidently the combination, but of course I did not know the direction or number of the turns. I set to work, however, to try all the possible combinations. In about fifteen minutes I turned 31 three times to the left, 49 twice to the right, and 61 once to the left. The door swung open. Inside I found a thousand caps and a thousand primers. We paid in full for our supplies and returned to the armory.

Most of the afternoon we spent loading shells and repairing our weapons. There were crowds of women and children in the streets, but the chiefs told me they would not be in danger in case we were attacked. At the first sight of a ship, all the non-combatants were to leave for a village on a near-by island which was so surrounded by coral reefs that no large boat could get near it. Only fighting men with guns would remain in the main village, and the chiefs assured me that every one was ready to fight to a finish.

By evening our preparations were complete, and sentries were posted on all sides of the island. I conferred with the chiefs in the big house, took a stroll around the village to inspect the guards, and finally went to bed in the assembly hall with the head chief's family.

The next morning I waked up rather late and was served an enormous breakfast by the chief's very attractive daughters.

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After eating to my full capacity, I was escorted to another house and served with another breakfast as big as the first. I could only nibble a little of each dish. After that came steaming pots of chocolate every half hour until I had to beg them not to bring any more.

Most of the morning I spent trying to sift the kernel of truth from the mass of wild rumors which were brought to me by messengers. On the whole the Panamanians along the coast seemed to be rather on the defensive. The police at Cidra had fled to the mainland after the visit of the American submarines. A Panamanian who managed a plantation near Armila had told the Indians at Pinos Island that he was giving up his job and going to Colombia. These were good signs, but I knew better than hope that all the Panamanians would leave the region as promptly. Only the unusually wise ones were getting out ahead of the trouble.

In the afternoon I gave another talk in the assembly hall, for many new Indians had arrived with guns and ammunition from the surrounding villages. They were burning with enthusiasm and martial spirit. My speech aroused them to the greatest frenzy yet. When I was finished, the chiefs came to me and announced solemnly that "they would all fight until the last dog was dead."

There was no one to fight for the moment. After my speech, one of our spies at Parvenir arrived with the news that the *El Norte* with the Governor on board had passed the island on her way to Colon. Evidently Mojica had decided that the Indians were on the war-path, and that he'd better not attack the free villages until he'd returned to Colon for reinforcements.

That evening the chiefs and I perfected our plan of campaign. We decided to wait for the *Impco*, which was expected the next morning. We wanted to hear the news from down

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the coast, and particularly I wanted to send the Declaration of Independence to Colon. I was anxious for that document to reach the Panamanian Government and the American Authorities before we started our attacks on the Panamanian posts. I was determined to abide by the rules of civilized warfare and not attack before war was declared.

After the *Impco* had come and gone, we planned to move at once on Parvenir, headquarters of Mojica. We had already sent scouts ahead to learn all possible facts about the island. New bands of fighting men were constantly arriving from other settlements. Our morale was very high, and I had no doubt but that we could capture every post before Mojica could return with any considerable force.

The next day there was nothing to do but wait for the *Impco*, which did not arrive. The Indians were anxious to be off for Parvenir, but I persuaded them to wait until war was formally declared. During the afternoon Chief Olopinguinua and I held an informal court in the big house to deal with the various problems incidental to the impending war. At 5 P.M. two prisoners were brought before us—a Greek and a negro, both Panamanian citizens.

It seemed that they had settled on Orange Key, a small island to the west. The Greek had opened a store and the Negro was working for him. The local chief had sent them to Cardi to find out if he should allow them to stay in his village.

They both had their wives and families with them and had never harmed or mistreated the Indians in any way. So the chief and I decided that they might stay on the island if they wanted to. But we warned them that there was going to be trouble all along the coast. We couldn't predict just what would happen. Finally both the Greek and the Negro decided to take their families and return to Colon.

Before the first "trial" was over, the Indians brought three

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husky Americans into the assembly hall. I let them wait until the Greek and the Negro were disposed of. Then they were brought up before the chief and me. They said they were employees of the Canal Administration. They had a small plantation on Gatun Lake, where they employed four San Blas Indians.

At the moment they were on a vacation and wanted to hunt on the headwaters of the Cardi River. I told them frankly that if their story was true, the Indians would probably not object. But if they were gold prospectors, they would have to leave.

Their story sounded pretty straight, and they offered to let us look through their baggage for shovels or gold-pans. I was convinced that they were telling the truth. So I told the chief to let them hunt all they wanted to. When they got back to the Canal Zone, they would take with them a favorable report—which was just what we wanted.

The chief saw the point and agreed to let them hunt. He told them that ordinarily the Indians did not permit strangers to enter their country. But since I had asked permission for them, it would be granted. He also offered to supply them with river canoes and two guides, but could not spare more men at this time.

The *Impco* arrived at dawn the next morning. I was told she was in sight before I got out of bed. I knew she would stop at the store-ship in the harbor, and so had left word with the Negroes to tell her to wait.

On board were the Harrises and Johnson, who all came ashore and spent several hours on the island. From them I heard the full story of the threatened attack of Mojica on Alligandi. They got started for the interior not long after I left for Cardi, but they had not gone more than ten miles when their porters refused to go farther. A runner had caught

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up with them and told the Indians that Mojica was threatening to destroy the village. So they had to abandon their trip and return to Alligandi.

When they got there, the *El Norte* was gone, leaving the threat to return in two days. Presently the *Impco* came into the harbor, and the Harrises and Johnson decided to go with her to Colon. But before she could get away, the *El Norte* appeared on the eastern horizon.

The three Americans were ashore at the time, and they watched the Indians' preparations. First, all the women and children were sent to the mainland, raising a great hubbub. One woman fainted and was later reported to have died. Then the men prepared for battle. They had many shotguns and rifles. Even the old men and boys were armed with long knives, and all were in deadly earnest. Harris thought that several hundred trained soldiers would have had difficulty in taking the village.

But the dreaded *El Norte* did not stop at Alligandi, much less attack the village. She gave the island a wide berth and sailed on toward the west. When she was gone, the Harrises and Johnson got on board the *Impco*.

That same day they reached Mono, the first of the Panamanian posts, where they spent the night. Mojica was there and came on board at once. Harris described him as a typical middle-class Panamanian with a very vicious face, but clever and shrewd and speaking good English. The first thing he asked was where I was, but he got no information. Everybody stuck to the story that I was in the mountains.

Mojica first assumed a very haughty attitude toward the Americans and ordered Harris to report to the Panamanian Minister of Justice as soon as they got back to civilization. Harris replied that that was exactly what he had planned to do. He had a great deal of his own to tell the Minister.

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This remark seemed to take Mojica down a little. He changed his manner, became extremely courteous, and invited the Americans on shore. There they found forty policemen, supplied with rifles and two sub-machine guns. Mojica arranged a demonstration of the latter, but Harris and Johnson, both of whom had seen service in the World War, were not convinced that the police knew how to operate them. They are supposed to fire two hundred shots a minute, but Johnson found that each gun was supplied with only two hundred rounds. This was good news for me. I decided that a well-planned night attack need not worry about those machine guns.

The next day they reached Playa Chica, another of the occupied posts. They found the village a starvation camp. The Indians were compelled to work six days a week, without compensation, for the Panamanian authorities on their own confiscated plantations. The seventh day they spent trying to gather enough food for themselves and their families. As a result all the Indian population looked undernourished and miserable. Mrs. Harris managed to make friends with some of the children and asked them what they wanted as presents. They all answered "biscuits." So she went to the store, bought all the biscuits or crackers they had, and distributed them free to the starving Indians. The local Panamanians appeared much annoyed at this, but they had no legitimate cause to stop her.

The next town they stopped at was Nargana, the home of "Jim Barre," "Alice Barre," and "Philip Robinson," the English-speaking Indians I had taken with me to the United States. Here they learned that both Jim and Philip had been arrested by the police and taken to prison at Parvenir. They could not learn what charges, if any, had been brought against them, except that they had been "talking nice about the Americans."

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This was the sum of the news brought by Harris and Johnson. I gave Harris all my papers and letters, including the copies of the Tule Declaration of Independence, and told him to see that one of the latter reached the American authorities and the Panamanian Government. He said no Panamanian official would get the documents away from him except over his dead body.

At two in the afternoon the *Impco* sailed for Mandinga at the head of the Gulf of San Blas. She intended to load coconuts there and then sail for Colon the next morning, expecting to arrive by nightfall. When she got past Parvenir safely, we would know that our Declaration would get to the American authorities. Then we could launch our attack without breaking the rules of war.

We waited impatiently, annoyed at this additional twenty-four hours of delay. At eight o'clock that night a fast launch came into the harbor of Cardi. In it were five heavily armed and rough-looking Americans and Canadians. They came ashore, demanding to speak to me. At first their manner was very brusque, and they attempted to cross-examine me as to what I was "preaching" among the Indians.

Before I would tell them anything, I asked them who they were and found that they were employees of an American banana company, which had a plantation at Mandinga. Then I told them that whatever I was doing was being reported to the proper authorities, and that certainly my affairs were none of their business.

Their leader, a Canadian, said he had heard that I was stirring up the Indians to fight. But the Indians were cowards and would not fight. I said nothing, and the Canadian began to talk about himself. He said he was known all along the coast as "Nigger Chepu" or "White Nigger," and he asked if I had heard of him. I said for some strange reason I had not.

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If he had known the scorn the Indians attach to the phrase "Nigger Chepu," he would never have boasted about it.

Finally, getting no information out of me, the five white men announced that they were going on to Nargana, an occupied village where there was "booze," and where they could "get" Indian girls. I warned them of the danger of the reefs at night, but the leader said he knew all the reefs in the dark.

They left at high speed. But they had not gone three hundred yards when they ran on a coral reef just off the village. We heard their engine stop. Then came cries for help. I sent out several Indian canoes to aid them, and after half an hour they were safely off the reef. But their ardor for booze and girls had cooled and they headed back for Mandinga and the banana plantation.

As soon as they left, we resumed our preparations for the coming campaign. Two canoes were sent down the coast to Alligandi, where they should arrive before noon the next day. They carried my orders to Chief Nellé. He was to attack Mono that night, while we were to fall upon Parvenir. Then our two armies would move toward one another, cleaning up the weaker Panamanian posts as we progressed along the coast. I rather suspected that the Alligandi Indians would delay their attack until they heard the news from Parvenir, but it would not matter very much.

A glance at the map will show the strategic situation. The Caribbean coast of Panama east of the Canal Zone is divided into two sections by San Blas Point, which is about seventy-five miles east of Colon. The coast to the west of the point belonged to the Panamanian negroes, but from the point eastward to the Colombian border it belonged to the Tule Indians except where the Panamanians had secured foot-holds by garrisoning villages and islands with armed police.

Parvenir, on a small island off San Blas Point, was the

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chief stronghold of the Panamanians and the headquarters of Governor Mojica. Sixty miles to the east, on the island of Mono, was the eastern limit of their conquest. Mono, like Parvenir, was garrisoned with a strong force of Panamanian troops, who were led by a certain redoubtable Captain Gordon who was supposed to be the son of an English army officer by a Jamaica negress. He had a record of great brutality and cruelty toward the Indians, but there was no doubt about his personal courage and ability. He was the one outstanding leader of the Panamanians and so had been put in charge of their most exposed outpost.

Between Parvenir and Mono were seven other fortified Panamanian posts, whose names, from west to east, were Cidra, Azucar, Nargana, Tigre, Ticantici, Playa Grande, and Playa Chica. Azucar and Playa Grande were on the mainland at the mouths of small rivers, but the rest were on coral islands. The coast, from Mono eastward to Puerto Obaldia and the Colombian border, was entirely free and unconquered, but there were also many free Indian villages scattered between the Panamanian posts all the way to Parvenir. On the southern shore of the Gulf of San Blas, only seven miles from Parvenir, lay Cardí, the westernmost Indian stronghold, where five thousand free Indians lived on a cluster of small islands. I had made it my headquarters for two reasons. It was the most exposed Indian position. And it was nearest to both Parvenir and Colon, from which I hoped would come the expected American intervention.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE SAN BLAS WAR

*

ON the morning of February twentieth the *Impco* passed Parvenir on her way to Colon. This was the signal. She carried Harris and the Tule Declaration of Independence. She should reach Colon by dark. We would attack Parvenir soon after midnight, and it could not be said of us that we made an attack without declaring war.

The day was spent in preparations, and we were ready long before midnight when we planned to start. But just before the zero hour one of our spies at Parvenir came into camp with the news that the Panamanians knew our plan. They had drawn heavily from the garrison at Tigre and now had forty-two trained soldiers, five machine guns, and about one hundred armed negroes.

I have no doubt now, to judge from the later exploits of the Indians, but that we could have captured Parvenir that night. There would have been a good deal of bloodshed and loss, however, and I felt our aims could be equally well accomplished with less loss of life. So I called off the attack on Parvenir, held my Indians in check at Cardi until dark the next day, and then made a quick dash for Tigre which lay thirty miles down the coast to the east.

At that time we had only four high powered rifles, no machine guns, and a nondescript armament of various gauges

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of shotguns, spears and machetes. We did not bother with bows and arrows for our quick night operations. Before starting on the attack, all of us, including myself in Indian dress, had our cheeks painted red, a red stripe put on our noses, and each was given some bitter concoction to drink, prepared by the Indian medicine men, which they said would "make us brave." It was not alcoholic and for my part I got no "kick" or other effect whatever from it.

I had three hundred picked men in about sixty small swift canoes, averaging about five men to a canoe. My own canoe was enormous, holding twenty men. Before departing from Cardí I carefully explained to the Indians the plan of attack, which was simple enough. We were to approach the shore in front of the post in a broad arc, with my canoe in the center. We were to beach the canoes and rush the post. I explained that some of us were sure to be shot, but our only chance was to rush ahead immediately and never stop. The Indians' only reply was, "We will do what you say."

We fell upon Tigre about 2 A.M. Sunday, Feb. 22nd. When we were within a hundred yards of the indented beach in front of the post, the Panamanian sentries started firing. We could hear excited shouts on shore. The Indians let out whoops and yells and frantically paddled for the beach. Our canoes grounded. The Indians rushed forward. There was a fusillade of shots and it was all over.

I deliberately hung back behind my forces, not merely because I didn't relish the fighting but also to watch my men and try to back up any section that faltered. There was no faltering. By the time I reached the little patio at the front of the village, not a Panamanian was alive. We secured three machine guns, over thirty Mauser rifles and considerable ammunition. Two Panamanian lieutenants and about twenty armed soldiers had constituted the garrison at Tigre. Not a

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single Indian was killed and there were only a few superficial wounds.

We did not disturb the small village of subdued Indians and negroes just back of the post. Many of them, including all the negroes, had fled by daybreak, and the rest, mostly Indian women and girls, prepared a native breakfast. Then I sent several canoes of local Indians, now rejoicing at their liberation, eastward to notify the Indians of the occupied posts that we were on our way to free them all. They had strict injunctions not to let the negro garrisons know of our coming, but to make sure that no Indians were with the Panamanians when we attacked. Then I stationed guards under "Charlie-gets-his-man" and slept or tried to sleep most of the day.

Late in the afternoon a whole horde of Indian canoes arrived from Playa Chica, twenty-five miles to the east. They had news of their own to tell. Our Indian messengers had reached Playa Chica by mid-morning. They had notified the conquered Indians there of the events at Tigre and advised them that we would attack the place after midnight. The local Indians were supposed merely to keep quiet, to keep out of the way, and await our arrival.

But Playa Chica was the village which had suffered most from Panamanian outrages. The leading Indian men had already been killed or driven away. All the rich plantations on the mainland had been seized by the usurpers. The remaining Indians, principally the women and children, were compelled to work six days of the week on their own confiscated plantations, without compensation, for the benefit of their Panamanian overlords. They were allowed only Sunday on which to bring in food and wood supplies for themselves and their families.

All the women and young girls had been outraged and raped by the negro Panamanians and reduced to the status of

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slaves and mistresses to their negro masters. Such women, according to Indian law, could not go back to the free Indian settlements. The Panamanians had made Playa Chica the scene of the Indians' greatest disgrace and humiliation. Fate was to make it the scene of the Indians' greatest revenge.

Playa Chica, like all the other Panamanian posts, had a small cleared plaza facing the beach on the inner side of the island. At one end of the plaza was a long structure used as a barracks for the soldiers. At the other end were several small private houses for the officers, while the sides were lined with the commissary, mess hall, and store rooms. In the center of the plaza was a tall flag-pole flying the Panamanian flag. The plaza was smooth, level, and used as a drill ground.

On this Sunday the bulk of the garrison of about twenty-four men were lolling about their barracks and dispersed through the good-sized Indian village behind the post. Quite a number of other Panamanian negroes were in town, both laborers and traders.

It was nearly noon. The Indians in the fields had been informed of the destruction of the Panamanian forces at Tigre and of our planned attack for that night. The Panamanian garrison had not yet been warned. Two negro soldiers, with rifles on their shoulders, paced guard back and forth in front of their barracks. The rest of the loaded rifles were stacked in military style under the protecting porch in front of the barracks. Most of the soldiers were lounging around waiting for the noon meal.

The Indians from the fields, augmented by the newly arrived messengers from Tigre, closed in unnoticed around the plaza. A young Indian boy, only seventeen years of age, dragging an ax, sauntered through the open plaza in front of the barracks, ostensibly taking a short cut back to the village from the water front. He timed himself so as to pass

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between the two sentries on guard just as they met in the center and continued on, back to back. The long dominant negroes were careless and ignored the bedraggled youth. Quick as a flash the Indian boy swung his ax on the neck of one of the sentries, killing him instantly. Then he seized his loaded rifle and shot the second sentry. The rest of the Indians rushed from their ambush behind the plaza, seized the stacked rifles, and fell upon the soldiers. It was sudden extermination. Then the aroused Indians scattered through the village. Not a single Panamanian escaped.

So our job at Playa Chica was accomplished by the local Indians in broad daylight without waiting for my main force.

The Indian youth who led the attack was brought to me. I will never forget him. Small, frail, weighing hardly one hundred and ten pounds, quiet and retiring, his dark eyes still blazed with the fire of his revenge. If the San Blas want a national hero to exemplify physical courage, they need search no farther than that boy.

That night after midnight we moved in force on Tican-tici, another small occupied post only five miles from Tigre. Most of the Panamanians there had fled when they heard of events at Tigre and Playa Chica, but six soldiers and their commanding lieutenant had been surrounded by the local Indians and confined to their barracks. They resisted and killed one Indian before being overpowered.

I returned to Tigre. Word came from Chief Nellé in command of our eastern forces, that Captain Gordon had concentrated at Mono a large force of soldiers and refugees. He had erected coral rock walls behind which were mounted machine-guns. A direct attack there was doubtful and certain to cause heavy loss to the Indians, therefore Nellé was passing by Mono and would occupy Playa Chica until I could join him and direct the attack on Mono. Nellé had done to Mono what I

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had done to Parvenir, passing it by for the moment to clear up the weaker posts first. I sent him word to await me at Playa Chica, and to gather all the food supplies he could.

Next night my force fell on Playa Grande, a strong post on the mainland between Tigre and Playa Chica. Here I divided my forces, half attacking from the ocean front and half from the river. The post here was located on an isolated point between the river and ocean, some distance from the village several hundred yards back up-stream. The garrison of two lieutenants and about twenty-four soldiers put up a feeble resistance and I think tried to surrender immediately. But there was no holding back my horde of now confident and victorious Indians once they were launched on the attack.

In all these attacks I deliberately hung back behind the advance forces, never took any personal part in the fighting, and resumed charge of the Indians only when the rush was over. It was their vengeance, not mine. By daybreak, however, I did calm the Indians sufficiently to get them to agree to accept the peaceful surrender of the numerous negro non-combatants living in the village near by. These negroes I sent by canoe back to Governor Mojica with the message that by the next night all the Panamanian posts except Mono and Parvenir would be in the hands of the Indians. An attack in force on Parvenir would be made early Wednesday or Thursday morning. I advised him to evacuate, as resistance could only mean the complete annihilation of the Panamanians.

Then I returned to Tigre to wait for news from Chief Nellé and his eastern forces. I was still hoping that the strong posts at Parvenir and Mono would be evacuated without fighting. I knew my Indians were invincible by now, but I knew that Captain Gordon, at least, would put up a desperate fight to the end and would inflict heavy losses on the Indians.

But Chief Nellé settled with Captain Gordon and Mono

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in his own way. Nellé was an excellent leader, with judgment and ability as well as courage. He had reconnoitered Mono by night and found it prepared for stubborn resistance. Next day, with half his force, he passed Mono, just out of rifle range, and proceeded westward to Playa Chica, which was already in the hands of the local Indians.

Captain Gordon saw Nellé's great fleet of war canoes pass his post to the westward. Later he received vague reports from some of his own subdued Indians of warfare to the west and fighting at Playa Chica. Next day, seeing no hostile forces in the vicinity of Mono, he left a small guard of about a dozen soldiers there, and with his main force of over forty men departed in canoes for Playa Chica, seven miles away.

His approach was of course observed by Chief Nellé and his followers, who promptly sent all their canoes around to the other side of the Island. Captain Gordon and his relief force found an apparently deserted village, flying, however, the new Tule flag instead of the Panamanian flag. Gordon's men hesitated at the approach, when Gordon with the courage and perhaps the stupidity of his British father, forged his canoe ahead, landed his crew and mustered his followers on the coral beach.

Then, at the head of his forces he started for the silent, apparently deserted village. Not a man got past the white coral beach. They were mowed down in their tracks!

With the extermination of Captain Gordon and the pick of his forces, Parvenir was the only important stronghold left on the San Blas Coast. Chief Nellé went back and wiped out the small garrison left at Mono that night. I sent "Charlie-gets-his-man" with about two hundred men to clean up the comparatively weak posts at Nargana and Cidra and returned with my main force to Cardi to direct the final assault on Governor Mojica's stronghold at Parvenir.

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Nargana was taken in broad daylight. A nephew of Mojica's was the lieutenant in charge there, and the Indians revenged his numerous outrages upon young Indian girls by mutilating his body. Cidra capitulated without the firing of a shot. Of the small garrison of only nine Panamanian soldiers, all were held as prisoners and hostages by the Indians.

That evening we gathered our forces for the final attack on Parvenir. I had sent scouts ahead to reconnoiter. We were only waiting for them to return. At last the first report arrived, and it caused an act of reprisal which I hate to tell about. The report was that Jim Barre, Philip Thompson, and one of our spies named Peter had been shot in cold blood by the Panamanians. Peter, to be sure, was a spy, but we had captured eight Panamanian spies, and all had been released at my direction. And the other two were held merely for "talking nice about the Americans." Their death was pure murder.

The news put the Indians in a frenzy. I could not hold them back. Against my orders, and without my knowledge, they immediately shot the policemen they had captured at Cidra. I hated this unnecessary bloodshed, but the thing was done. Certainly the Indians had plenty of provocation.

Later in the evening more news came from our scouts. They reported that Parvenir was deserted. The Governor, his soldiers, and all the inhabitants had fled to Colon. At once we set out to occupy the abandoned stronghold. We were three hundred strong in thirty big canoes. The wind was very light, and unfavorable. We took to paddles, but day broke while we were still a mile from the island.

As our scouts reported, the place was utterly deserted. The population must have fled in utter confusion. The wash still hung on the clothes lines. Important papers lay on the Governor's desk. There were twenty rifles in the gun racks. The store-houses were full of food, clothing, ammunition. In the

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living quarters were personal belongings, clocks, victrolas, sewing machines, and typewriters.

I made no attempt to keep the Indians from looting the houses and stores. They loaded everything into the canoes except the wardrobes and iron bed-steads. But I did manage to stop them from burning the buildings. The Governor had a fine house and office—with water supply, electric lights, bathrooms, etc. There was a complete saw-mill, a carpenter's shop, and a large launch in process of construction.

I persuaded the Indians to give vent to their revenge by first burning the negro shacks. Then I called them together and suggested that they spare the valuable main buildings. They cried out that they wanted to burn everything. They wanted no more of Parvenir. As a last resort I asked them to give the island to me. I had done much for them, and if I had such a place at my disposal, I could bring my friends down to stay there and visit them. Immediately they shouted approval, and the buildings were saved.

But I had no real intention of staying at Parvenir. It was too dangerous a place to defend from attack. So the Indians hauled down the Panamanian flag and ran up the new Tule flag which we had just adopted. Then we all set sail for Cardí, the canoes loaded to their gunwales with loot.

CHAPTER XXXV

INTERVENTION

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THIS ended the first phase of the Tule War of Independence. We had driven every Panamanian from the country and won every battle with very little loss. But I at least realized that only intervention by the United States would save us from a desperate and bloody campaign when the Panamanians returned. If they were allowed to recruit more troops, including American adventurers to operate machine guns, and charter large vessels with cannon, I knew it would be impossible for us to hold any of the coastal villages.

So even before the final occupation of Parvenir, I had started work on a plan of campaign to follow in case American intervention did not materialize. We would hold the villages against attack with small-arms. But as soon as vessels with big guns appeared, we would retreat to the jungle valleys of the interior, where we could maintain ourselves almost indefinitely by guerrilla warfare.

The Indians had agreed to this plan. They knew the revenge the Panamanians would take upon them if they got the chance. The chiefs of the interior had offered to cover our retreat and supply us with food. But still we all hoped for intervention.

About noon the next day two airplanes flew over Cardí and Parvenir. This I regarded as a favorable omen. Evidently

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the Americans were keeping track of the course of events. A little later the motor-yacht *San Blas* came into the harbor of Cardi, flying the American flag. She belonged to the American banana company which owned the plantation at Mandinga, and the manager sent word for me to come on board.

I did not trust his outfit of Italian-Americans and Panamanians, who had been looting the Indians with a free hand, but I told him that I would receive him on shore and guarantee his safety. After a long delay he arrived, accompanied by the Canadian, "Nigger Chepu." I had a guard of a hundred armed Indians lined up in a hollow square inside the big house. The leading chiefs and I occupied the center.

"Nigger Chepu" was no longer the scornful person of the other night, who said the Indians were too cowardly to fight. He and his boss looked much impressed. Nervously they asked our intentions toward their plantation. I said they would not be molested in any way as long as they remained within their legal rights. They looked much relieved and told me that the Panamanian Government had commandeered their steamer, the *La Isla*. She was due here the next day with two hundred and fifty soldiers. I told them to be assured that the Indians would fight to the death, and they went back to their launch.

As soon as the yacht was gone, we set about preparing for the expected battle with the new Panamanian forces. The coral-rock walls at strategic points on the island were strengthened. Guns and ammunition were got in order, and arrangements made to send the women, children, and old men away to the mainland on the approach of the enemy.

None of the warrior Indians slept in hammocks that night. They have an old superstition that it is unlucky to sleep in a hammock the night before a battle, but I finally persuaded most of them to lie down on the ground and get all the rest

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possible. There was a grim determination on the faces of the Indians which showed that they fully realized the gravity of the situation, but they waited with admirable stoicism. There were no doubts, objections or complaints; none showed any inclination to avoid meeting the issue. My admiration for them, already high, increased still more as I watched them that night. For myself, I got several hours of good sleep after midnight, knowing that the sentries would immediately report any unusual occurrence.

At daybreak, the guards woke me up, saying that a large ship was visible on the horizon. Thinking it was the expected Panamanians, I was on the beach immediately. On the horizon ten miles away were two tall masts above a still barely discernible hull. But instead of ordering the Indians to start sending the women and children to the mainland, I told them to wait.

Those tall masts did not fit the description of the coast-wise fruit steamer on which the Panamanian troops were coming. Soon my growing hopes were confirmed. The approaching vessel was a large modern warship, and such a warship in such waters could be only American.

The keen-eyed Indians had also detected the unusual features of the approaching vessel, and a gleam of hope appeared in their tired eyes. I told them to go to their houses, get their breakfasts, and not worry. The boat was an American warship, and she would not permit an armed Panamanian vessel to fire upon Indian villages.

The tension was broken. Glad shouts and laughter rang on all sides. For with American intervention once accomplished, I knew mediation and investigation was sure to result in some recognition of the Indians' right to live.

On came the warship, until we could plainly see the

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American flags. When within a mile of Cardi, she dropped anchor in the channel through the coral reef.

Then came an amusing incident. From behind Parvenir Island, seven miles away, appeared a second vessel, unmistakably the fruit steamer *La Isla*, on which were the Panamanian troops. She cleared the island, sighted the American warship at anchor off Cardi Bay. She stopped, patrolled sideways for half an hour, and then retreated to Parvenir Island, anchoring in the harbor.

Soon a motor launch from the warship arrived at Cardi, bringing an American naval officer, a newspaper man, and Mr. William Markham of the Canal Zone. The latter, a Canal official, was perhaps the one American there who really knew something about the San Blas Coast. He had visited the Indians as far east as Nargana and won their partial confidence.

The Americans were enthusiastically welcomed by the Indians. Markham told me that the American Minister to Panama, Dr. South, was on board the warship, which was the cruiser *Cleveland*. He asked me to come aboard and guaranteed me safe conduct and safe return to the Indians. So, with "Charlie-gets-his-man" and two other chiefs, we went out to the *Cleveland*.

There I was received by Dr. South who told me that several high Panamanian officials were on board, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and one or two other Cabinet Ministers. Their titles were all quite impressive, but the men were quite typical of Panama, and I knew or had met most of them in the past.

I went into a long conference with Dr. South. Panama, he said, considered me to blame for the Indian uprising, and demanded that I be seized and turned over for trial. The only word he had yet received from the State Department in

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Washington was to the effect that, if I had been guilty of fomenting insurrection in Panama, the American Government would not take steps to protect me. He had sent for me to learn my side of the matter. The future would depend upon the trend of events and further instructions from Washington.

I reviewed the whole Indian situation with Dr. South, including my own participation, and requested that he visit the Indians on shore and investigate for himself the truth of the Panamanian outrages against them. I reminded him that in the final analysis, America was responsible to the Panamanian Indians.

Finally Dr. South decided to go ashore. Soon he set out for the island with Markham, several American officers, and myself. We were received in the big house. Olopinginua and his leading chiefs were seated in a row of the newly captured cane chairs from the Governor's stronghold, while the Americans occupied another row opposite. I sat with the Indians.

This central group was surrounded by a hollow square of over two hundred Indian warriors, all now carrying captured modern high-powered rifles. Behind them were hordes of men, women and children.

The American Minister explained that he had come to San Blas in the hope of being of assistance in securing a resumption of peace between the Indians and the Panamanians. He asked the Indians to give him their version of their trouble.

Olopinginua, speaking as ranking chief, gave a very straightforward, manly statement of the Indians' wrongs, concluding by saying that they were merely fighting for the right to live in their own way in their own country. They wanted only peace and justice. They could not secure it from Panama. So they wanted America to help them and would place their fate in America's hands. It was very apparent that Dr. South and the other Americans were surprised and impressed with

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the bearing of the Indians, their dignity, straightforwardness, and high intelligence.

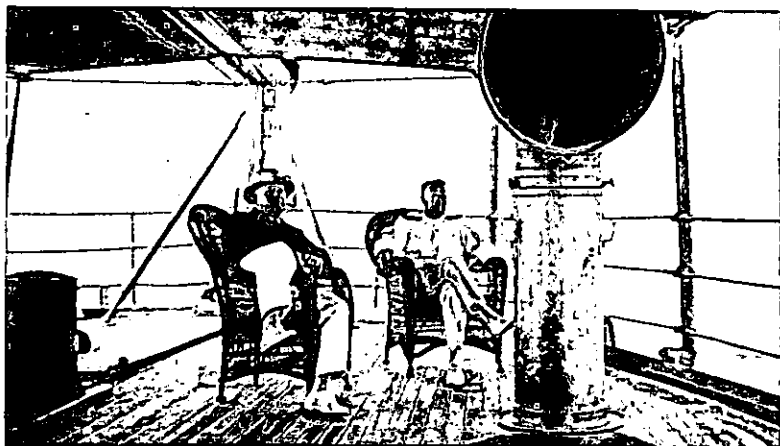
Then the Minister requested me to leave the assembly, saying he wanted to question the Indians regarding the nature of my participation in the uprising. I went outside, first publicly asking the Indians to tell him the full truth. I had not made the slightest intimation to any of the Indians, indirectly or otherwise, as to how they should answer questions about me. My own conscience was clear, although of course I realized that technically Panama could lodge very serious charges against me.

I was recalled in half an hour to find all the participants, Americans and Indians, beaming and happy. I felt a very friendly feeling in the room, but was hardly prepared to hear the result of the investigation.

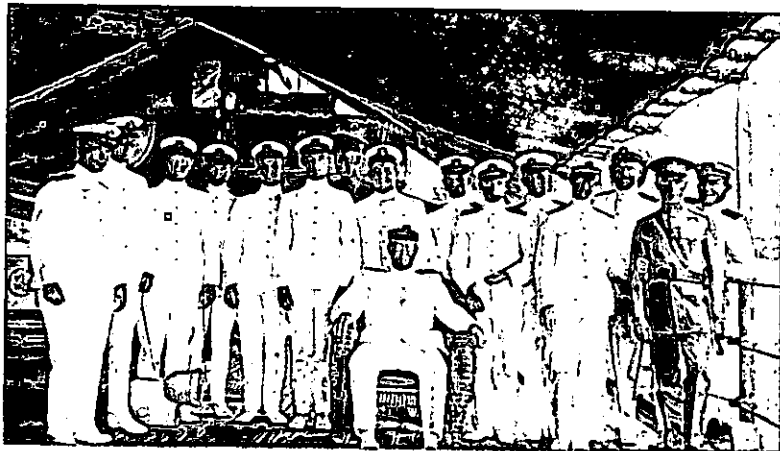
Dr. South said that the Indians to a man had absolved me of all responsibility for the uprising. They said I was merely a friend who had helped them in sickness and been good to them. All I had done was to write in English, at their request, their statements and declarations so that the American authorities could know the truth of the situation.

Apparently the Indians had quickly sensed that I was under trial. They had decided how to protect me, and had stuck to their story. In some mysterious way the agreement to follow this policy seemed to have spread all along the San Blas Coast. I was to learn later that another American naval vessel, the *Scorpion*, had questioned the Indians of the eastern coast, and they had unanimously insisted I had had no part whatever in the uprising, but had simply acted as their friend and interpreter.

Dr. South and his party then returned to the *Cleveland*, promising the Indians that there would be no attack by the



*Captain Wells of U. S. Cruiser "Cleveland"
and U. S. Minister South During the Intervention
in San Blas War*



*Captain Wells and Officers.
U. S. Cruiser "Cleveland" at Intervention
in San Blas War*

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Panamanians—at least not before the following day. I returned to the warship with the Minister.

Immediately conferences were held between the American Minister and the Panamanian officials on board. The Minister found the Panamanians entirely willing to hold their forces on the island of Parvenir and await developments. Later, I was called before the Panamanian officials, together with the leading Indians, on the understanding that our appearance was voluntary and in no way to interfere with our returning to Cardi when we wished.

This first "trial" was somewhat amusing. It was conducted by Sr. Francisco de la Ossa, Chief Justice of the Panamanian Supreme Court, who had been sent by President Chiari to conduct an investigation and if possible bring me back to Panama for trial.

So well did the Indians acquit themselves in this investigation, and so completely did they lay the blame for the uprising to Panama's own outrages that the judge soon dropped all further investigation. But he continued to demand that I be delivered into his custody. It was quite evident that Panama was far more anxious to punish me than to get to the bottom of the uprising.

But Dr. South refused to hand me over. The Panamanian officials were quite nonplused. After long discussion which convinced the Panamanians that if they renewed the war, it would be without the aid of American troops or material, they agreed to a truce on the basis of an agreement outlined by Dr. South. The Indians were to be guaranteed their fundamental rights, and I was to be permitted to return unmolested to America. The terms of this proposed truce were wirelessly from the *Cleveland* to the Panamanian Government late that night.

CHAPTER XXXVI

PEACE

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MEANWHILE it developed that the Panamanian troops at Parvenir Island were already in trouble, and were losing the extreme ardor for battle which they had shown on their departure from Panama. Their island had no fresh water supply, and the small amount brought from Panama had been used for the officers' baths. Their food was scanty, and the post was without furniture or other equipment. They seemed more than willing to maintain the truce.

But their serenity was shattered early the next morning. A wireless came from the President of Panama to the General commanding the Panamanian forces, addressed in care of the *Cleveland*, "*Attack and capture Cardí immediately.*" (signed) *Chiari*.

The message was received by the wireless operator of the *Cleveland* and delivered to Captain Wells who finally decided to deliver it to the Panamanian officials with the warning that in future he would act as "go between" only for peaceful and not war-like messages.

The contents of the message soon percolated through the officers' mess and came to me. I informed the American Minister that if hostilities were to be renewed I preferred to return to the Indians. Accordingly I was sent ashore, accompanied by several of the Americans as neutral observers.

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I called the Indians together and told them that the Panamanians had been ordered to attack at once. America could not intervene without explicit instructions from Washington. The attack would probably come that night. At once they decided to send the women, children and non-combatants to the mainland. The men all pledged themselves to fight in the defense of Cardi until all were killed.

Soon hundreds of big canoes loaded down with Indian families and all their movable belongings, set out in a continuous line for the mainland half a mile away. All day they plied back and forth, stripping the island village. The old men ashore built temporary palm shelters along the river, while the fighting men increased the rock fortifications on the island.

I felt reasonably certain that the Indians could beat off all small-arm attacks for several days. But I knew, as the Panamanians did not, how little ammunition the Indians really had. Many of the rifles of odd caliber had only one cartridge apiece. Two of them had about one hundred fifty rounds each, and these two would have to do all the long range shooting, the others and the numerous shot-guns being reserved for close range in case the Panamanians attempted a landing.

Toward evening a message came from the *Cleveland*, saying there would be no attack from the Panamanians that night. I returned to the cruiser and learned of an amusing interchange of wireless messages between the Panamanian Government and their field forces, which had brought the operations to a standstill.

When the first message came from Chiari, ordering them to "attack and capture Cardi immediately," the Panamanians were well aware of the thorough preparedness of the Indians. After heated discussion, they wirelessly back the following message: "*Cardi strongly fortified. Can not attack without big guns.*"

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To this an answer soon came from the President: "*Attack at once with big guns.*"

As the only big guns on the San Blas Coast were those on the American warship, which were not available to the Panamanians, the field forces replied, "*Send big guns.*"

At this stage Commander Wells told the Panamanians that he would neither send nor deliver any more messages for them. Unless they wished to transmit peace-making messages, the wireless of the U. S. S. *Cleveland* was no longer at their disposal.

Chiari knew his field forces had no big guns. The field forces knew the Government had none to send them. But the exchange of messages provided both parties with sufficient alibis and paved the way toward peace negotiations.

Next day, Minister South and the Panamanian Chief Justice set out to Panama City by airplane to confer with Chiari and his cabinet. They returned the following morning and I was asked to appear before them. But as luck would have it, my old malaria broke out again in severe form, and I was confined to bed by order of the ship's doctor. For two days I was unable to leave my bed, and only then, while still quite weak, did I learn of the decision.

Panama agreed to negotiate a treaty with the Indians, but refused to exonerate me or withdraw their demand that I be delivered into its custody. A meeting had been arranged on Parvenir Island between the Panamanian officials and the leading Indian chiefs. The Indians were escorted to Parvenir in the *Cleveland's* small boats, accompanied by the American Minister and Commander Wells. The Treaty of Parvenir was drawn up and signed by the Panamanians and Indians, and witnessed by the American Minister. Its terms were as follows:

1. Hostilities shall cease on both sides.
2. The Indians shall not be held responsible for any acts during the uprising or resulting from it.

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3. The Panamanian Governor of San Blas, Sr. Mojica, is dismissed from office.

4. All surviving Panamanian Police formerly stationed on the San Blas Coast are recalled.

5. Panama in future shall occupy only the Island of Parvenir on the San Blas Coast.

6. New Panamanian Police stationed on Parvenir Island shall all be white, married men.

7. Panama shall not impose schools upon the Indians without the Indians' consent.

8. Panama shall return to the Indians the shotguns formerly taken away from them, and return their confiscated gold ornaments.

9. The Indians in future shall be permitted to have shotguns and ammunition, but no high-powered rifles.

10. The Indians shall return to Panama the rifles and machine-guns captured from the Panamanians, as well as all material taken from Parvenir.

11. The Indians shall be granted local self-government and granted equal rights with all citizens of Panama.

12. Provision shall be made in future that a suitable and sufficient area of the Indian lands shall be set aside as a permanent home and reservation for the Indians and shall be held inviolate to them, free from exploitation by others.

13. On the above considerations, the Indians recognize the sovereignty of Panama.

With this treaty signed, I felt that I had done all I could for the Indians at that time. My status was still the obstacle to complete accord. Panama refused to absolve me, demanded that I be turned over for trial. For me to have returned to the Indians, now that a satisfactory peace had been secured, would have meant continued friction.

WHITE INDIANS OF DARIEN

Nothing would have pleased me more than a full and fair trial and a true investigation of the Indian situation. But such a trial was not possible under Panamanian jurisdiction. So I decided to rest my fate with the American authorities.

Under the provisions of International Law, a foreigner in any country, charged with a crime and feeling he will not be granted a fair trial, may apply for asylum either to his country's Legation or to a war vessel of his country if one happens to be present. In such case, if the Diplomatic Representative, or Naval Commander so appealed to, thinks there are reasonable grounds to believe justice will not be granted to his countryman, he may offer asylum, and the petitioner is then not turned over to the local authorities without direct instructions to that effect from his home State Department. Otherwise, he is returned to his own country, and the prosecuting country may then inaugurate extradition proceedings against him, when the accused is first given an opportunity to defend himself in his home courts.

Accordingly, I made formal request of Commander Wells of the U. S. S. *Cleveland* for the right of asylum, which he granted me, pending instructions from Washington.

Soon I learned that the State Department approved his action. I would not be turned over to Panama except on the recommendation of the American Minister, Commander Wells, and the American Governor of the Canal Zone. These three officials were thoroughly conversant with the whole matter and I was safe in their hands. Panama would be forced to resort to extradition proceedings in the American Courts if it wished to prosecute its charges against me.

Panama, however, decided not to adopt that method. The Chief Justice made a report and President Chiari issued the following decree:—

“It is a question of public notoriety that the United

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States citizen, R. O. Marsh, who, with the permission of the Panamanian Government has been more than a year among the San Blas Indians under the pretext of carrying out scientific investigations, was the person who prepared and wrote the proclamation launched by several chieftains of that territory, in which they declared their independence from the Republic of Panama and constituted a separate entity under the name of Republic of Tule.

There are also reasons to presume that it was the same Mr. Marsh who instigated the Indians to rebel against the Panamanian authorities and to commit the barbarous acts carried out against defenseless persons and members of the colonial police stationed on the islands of the San Blas territory.

Although from the investigations carried out in the region of the rebellion, it has not been possible to legally prove that R. O. Marsh is responsible for a common crime for which the government could ask his extradition by the United States, there is ample proof that the aforementioned individual has abused the hospitality and permission granted him by the nation, through its authorities, helping, perhaps only intellectually, in the execution of acts of rebellion against the agents and representatives of the Panamanian government and in demonstrations against our national integrity.

Consequently, by virtue of the dispositions contained in Chapter II, Title IV, Book IV of the Administrative Code, and after obtaining the consent of the Cabinet Council,

BE IT RESOLVED:

To declare that the foreigner, R. O. Marsh, be expelled from the territory of the Republic of Panamá, prohibiting his future entry under penalty of arrest and

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punishment in conformity with the laws of the country if this prohibition is violated.

The national authorities are entrusted with the strict fulfillment of this Resolution.

(signed) R. CHIARI, (*President*)

(signed) CARLOS L. LOPEZ. (*The Secretary of Government and Justice.*)"

So I returned to the Canal Zone aboard the U. S. S. *Cleveland*, and from there received passage on an American vessel to New York.

Since my return, while endeavoring to recuperate from malaria and an anemic condition of the blood, I have received several messages through friendly channels from the San Blas Indians.

Apparently Panama is not living up to the Treaty of Parvenir. The Panamanian government has purchased and equipped a small cruiser or patrol boat fitted with large guns which can lie off the coast beyond rifle shot and destroy the Indian villages with impunity. She has already violated the treaty in three respects, having occupied the Indian village on the island of Nargana, stationed a garrison of sixty armed unmarried negroes on the island, and arrested several Indians charged with participation in the recent uprising.

These negroes are indulging in the same practices and outrages against the Indians, men, women and girls, as formerly practiced. The Nargana Indians are again leaving the island, abandoning their homes and valuable plantations.

But meanwhile, I hope to impress on the American Government and American people that America, in fact and in justice, is responsible to the Darien Indians. Only active continued American supervision can ever bring any true peace or justice to San Blas.

80°W

30'

79°

